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Second Session, 41st Parliament

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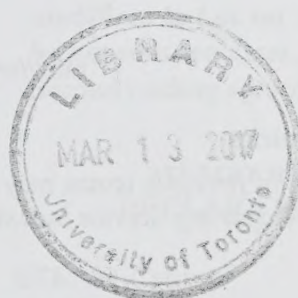
Deuxième session, 41^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 6 March 2017

Lundi 6 mars 2017



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Todd Decker

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffier
Todd Decker

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 6 March 2017

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 6 mars 2017

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Norm Miller: I'd like to welcome to the Ontario Legislature the leader of the official opposition of the Yukon, Stacey Hassard; the opposition critic for environment, Wade Istchenko; the opposition energy, mines and resources critic, Scott Kent; and Michael Mark as well. They are here in the members' west gallery visiting this morning. Please welcome them.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's a pleasure to introduce your old staff member and a constituent, Chris Yaccato, and his colleague Hayley Corbett, from the Lung Association. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Steve Clark: On behalf of the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook, I'd like to introduce guests who are in the members' gallery this morning. They are guests of page captain Luca DiPietro: his parents, Franca and Frink DiPietro, and sister Daria. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to introduce guests of page captain Sebastian Frayne: mother, Jennifer McDonald; father, Michael Frayne; sisters Maddie and Claire, and brothers Alex and Colin. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. Good morning. I think they're just coming in. We have students from the Montessori Learning Centre in Pickering here at Queen's Park. I just want to say welcome to Queen's Park, and enjoy your day.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to welcome the parents of page Grace Glosnek, Mary-Anne and Frank, from my riding of Perth—Wellington. Page Grace has received honourable mention from the Speaker's Award for Youth Writers. Congratulations, Grace.

Mr. Steve Clark: It gives me great pleasure on behalf of our House leader, the member for Simcoe—Grey, to introduce guests of page Nolan Campbell, who are in the public gallery with us this morning: his mother, Leanne Campbell, and his brother, Aiden Campbell, who is a former page, from March 2015. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, and welcome.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I would like to welcome to Queen's Park another grade 10 class from St. Marcellinus

Secondary School, which is located in my great riding of Mississauga—Brampton South. I look forward to meeting them after question period.

MEMBER FOR YORK—SIMCOE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Seeing no further introductions, it is now time for a point of order. The member from Dufferin—Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I seek unanimous consent that each party be permitted to speak for up to five minutes to recognize the member from York—Simcoe's tenure as the longest-serving female member of the Legislature.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think I'll wait until I have everyone's attention before I put this motion forward. Thank you.

The member from Dufferin—Caledon is seeking unanimous consent to speak for up to five minutes on the member's record-breaking stint as an MPP.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Stint? Tenure, I think.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Tenure, I think. Do we agree? Agreed.

The member from London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is an honour for me to rise today as the NDP critic for women's issues to pay tribute to the member for York—Simcoe. As the longest-serving woman MPP ever elected in this province, she has represented her constituents well for more than 22 years, successfully contesting six elections between 1995 and 2014, and achieving a remarkable milestone for women in Ontario.

Speaker, let's reflect on what the Ontario Legislature looked like in 1995, the year Julia was first elected as MPP. Of the 130 MPPs who would be taking their seats at Queen's Park that year, just 19 were women, who made up 14.6% of the provincial Legislature. Of the 82 Progressive Conservatives who were elected to the PC caucus, only 11 were women, making up just 13.4% of all PC members of the Legislature.

As the Globe and Mail reported shortly after the 1995 PC victory: "Welcome to the new 82-member Conservative caucus at Queen's Park, which met for the first time this week. It's almost completely white, mainly male, with the overwhelming majority of its members coming from small business backgrounds."

I suspect the member for York—Simcoe was unfazed to find herself among her new colleagues. After all, both of her 1995 campaign opponents were men, and one was an incumbent, so she could certainly hold her own in the male-dominated world of politics.

With her husband, John, she managed both the family farm as well as a dog breeding business, making her as knowledgeable as any of her male colleagues about the challenges of running a small business. As a secondary school educator for 28 years prior to her election, one can imagine that her discipline and classroom management skills were certainly an asset.

A rookie MPP, Munro was appointed as parliamentary assistant to the Premier to promote volunteerism, prompting the Ottawa Citizen to comment: "Munro is a rare creature in Premier Mike Harris's government. She's actually been asked to come up with ideas rather than simply end, repeal or reduce things."

Julia Munro was born in Hamilton in 1942 and was raised in Toronto. After graduating with a BA in history from the University of Toronto, she began her career as a teacher in 1971. After 24 years teaching history in Markham, she became a secondary school department head for the York Region Board of Education.

Like many women who become involved in political life, Julia saw a problem and wanted to fix it. A Toronto Star article covering the 1995 race states: "Munro says she used to sit around the kitchen table complaining about the state of politics and finally decided she had to get involved."

She became active in her local PC riding association, serving as riding president from 1992 to 1994, and she put her name on the ballot in 1995 for the riding then known as Durham–York. In 1999, she was re-elected in York North, a seat she held in 2003 despite the defeat of the government. She was re-elected in 2007, 2011 and, most recently, in 2014.

1040

I asked my NDP colleagues for juicy stories about Julia that I could share in my tribute. The thing is, there are none. She is always prepared and always professional. Her style is calm and reassuring, practical and unruffled. During legislative debates, her remarks are well structured and well researched. In committee, she is known for her ability to ask pointed questions that cut right to the core of an issue. Instead of juicy stories, what my colleagues did tell me about was Julia's warm smile, her droll sense of humour and her dry wit, and the twinkle in her eye when one would least expect it.

The member for Kitchener–Waterloo told me about the advice she received from Julia after the 2014 election. Noticing my NDP colleague despondent and alone in the dining room, Julia asked what was wrong. She listened carefully, reflected on what had been shared, nodded and said, "Catherine, the best thing you can do is sleep." This quiet bit of wisdom exemplifies Julia's pragmatic approach and helped change my colleague's perspective on life at Queen's Park. Julia still checks in every once in a while to see how the member for Kitchener–Waterloo is doing and whether she is following the advice that was imparted.

Throughout her political career, Julia has been deeply committed to encouraging citizen participation in political life. Interviewed during her 2011 election campaign,

she emphasized that an engaged citizenry is the key to our system and warned against the erosion of democracy that is caused by cynicism or apathy. Speaker, of all her accomplishments, this is perhaps Julia Munro's most important legacy. For that, all Ontarians, and Ontario women in particular, are richer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: It is an honour for me to rise today to recognize the member from York–Simcoe as we celebrate a remarkable milestone she has accomplished. MPP Munro is now the longest-serving female MPP in Ontario's history. This is a truly impressive achievement and one we should all be proud of.

For 21 years, the member from York–Simcoe has been serving the people of Ontario. For 21 years, she has been the voice for the people in her riding. No question: Her presence in the Legislature over the past 21 years is truly inspiring. The member has served her constituents and the people of Ontario longer than any other woman in our province. Just think about that. There was a time when people thought that there was no place for women in politics. Well, they were wrong. There is a place—room—for women in politics, and women like MPP Munro are living proof of that.

No matter how far we've come, as Ontario's first-ever Minister of the Status of Women I know that it is trailblazers like the member for York–Simcoe who have paved the way for women, and I thank her for that. She is a change-maker. The world has changed a lot over the last 21 years. More and more women are now getting involved in government, getting elected and becoming our leaders. Much of that is due to the strong and successful women in the Legislature, right here—women like the member for York–Simcoe, women who have shown us that it is possible to dream and it is possible to make that dream a reality.

Throughout her career, MPP Munro has inspired many people and broken many barriers. It is especially fitting that we are recognizing the member today because this is the start of International Women's Week. Later this week, we will also recognize International Women's Day. This year's theme is "Equality Matters," and yes, it does.

For our government, gender equality is of critical importance. As I look around this House, I see that two of our three party leaders, Premier Kathleen Wynne and NDP leader Andrea Horwath, are women. I also see Elizabeth Dowdeswell, our female Lieutenant Governor, and our new female Sergeant-at-Arms, Jackie Gordon. I see a cabinet appointed by our Premier that is 40% women, the highest percentage in Ontario's history, and I see a government that has set a target of 40% of all provincial board and agency appointments by 2019.

We are doing this because we are challenging not only ourselves but businesses as well to put more women in positions of leadership. We are doing this because gender diversity in Ontario leadership benefits us all. And we are doing this because, absolutely, it's the right thing to do.

The member's service to Ontario benefits and inspires us all. It has contributed to creating a more equal society,

and I am grateful to women like her who help raise the status of women both in our Legislature and in our province.

I want to thank the member from York–Simcoe for leading the way, for being a trailblazer and for showing women and girls out there that, yes, you too can have a voice in politics. I offer my best wishes as she celebrates this historic achievement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses?

Ms. Laurie Scott: It is an honour and privilege to rise in the House today to acknowledge and celebrate the accomplishment of a remarkable woman, someone I take great pride in calling my good friend and distinguished colleague.

As 2017 reflects the 100th anniversary in Ontario of women's right to vote, it also holds another milestone in our province for women in government. First elected in June 1995, Julia Munro, our respected colleague from York–Simcoe, now stands as Ontario's longest-serving woman member of Parliament. Today, she has surpassed 7,944 days as a member of this Legislature.

Julia's career at Queen's Park spans six consecutive provincial elections, three riding name changes, representing Durham–York, York North and York–Simcoe. After her first victory in the 1995 election, Julia was named parliamentary assistant to the Premier in the newly elected Mike Harris government. She would go on to serve as government whip, parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, the Chair of Management Board of Cabinet and Minister of Culture in subsequent Parliaments. And that is when things changed for Julia and our fellow colleagues, as the next election and the three to follow relegated "team blue" to official opposition status. Yet Julia continued her work as an MPP without missing a beat, understanding and respecting her role and representing her constituents with the same energy and care.

In opposition, Julia has served as critic for culture twice, seniors twice, children's services twice, community and social services twice and the Poverty Reduction Strategy three times, along with sitting on 13 different committees. That's what happens when you stick around so long.

Through all the years, with her beloved husband, John, and daughter, Genevieve, by her side, Julia's devotion and dedication to politics and serving in office have never wavered. Julia has always been passionate about her policy work. An avid dog lover and breeder, Julia has fought for animal rights, regulations and standards of care. With her keen interest in the financial health and security of Ontarians, Julia introduced new legislation to establish a small business bill of rights and, most notably, advocated for her bill on pooled registered pension plans twice.

As some of you may know, Julia was not always a politician. Prior to her time at Queen's Park, Julia worked as an educator, serving the majority of her time as a high school history teacher. Not surprisingly, her reputation

with her students reflected the level of commitment and perspective she imparted on their learning.

Kicking up the cool factor, even for a history teacher, one of Julia's former students was Tyler Stewart, the drummer of the infamous Canadian rock band Barenaked Ladies. In an interview for *Professionally Speaking* magazine for a story entitled "The Barenaked Ladies Remarkable Teachers," when Tyler was asked to choose the high school teacher who had the greatest impact on him, he chose Julia Munro. He praised her for her ability to make history interesting in a way that would relate to individual students' interests. He went on to say, "I found that she really respected the intellect of her students. She really seemed to have a grasp of each kid's capabilities and set jobs for them accordingly."

1050

As much as Julia made history interesting for her students, she remains a history buff herself. Julia was asked who her political hero was, to which she answered Elizabeth Simcoe, also known as Elizabeth Gwillim. Elizabeth was a diarist, historian and artist, and the wife of the first Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, John Graves Simcoe. Elizabeth's diary and some 595 paintings left for us a vibrant story of life in colonial Ontario, and her name is lent to two townships in Julia's riding, East and West Gwillimbury. That's a testament to Julia's love of history and government in one snapshot.

To know Julia is to know honesty, integrity, sincerity and thoughtfulness personified. To work with Julia is to work with commitment, intention, compassion and conviction. Her success lies in a legacy of not only one fulfilled career, but two. Her bond with people, whether past students or current constituents, is based in genuine care, concern, admiration and respect. Julia has always seen her role as that of a conduit, saying, "The one promise I make to voters is to work hard and be accessible.... I have always kept in mind that I am here to speak up for my constituents." There's a humble grace for her purpose.

As one of my dear colleagues reflected, she quietly and competently goes about her job, does it very well and never seeks the limelight. She draws attention to the issues she cares about but doesn't try to draw attention to herself. She is beloved by her constituents and admired and respected by everyone at Queen's Park, where she is often referred to as Lady Munro.

It is only fitting that the former and distinguished history teacher who left her mark on her students so many years ago now leaves her own mark in our parliamentary history books as the longest-serving woman MPP in Ontario. We honour and salute you. Congratulations, Julia.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all of the members for their very heartfelt and kind comments. I would only just add that I am always amazed and impressed with your grace, particularly through any adversities that you've been challenged with. You've taken them and come out the other side. I congratulate you on this wonderful milestone.

I would like to offer the member an opportunity to respond. You can't have 15 minutes, but you can have some time.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm glad you set the limit, because I don't feel that there is quite the same opportunity for me to respond as those of you who have chosen to respond, because you at least had some warning.

But I do want to say that it is a moment of a great deal of emotion for me as I listen to our members and reflect on the pieces of information that they have been able to find and the way in which they have been able to portray me. I certainly will always, always remember the sincerity and warmth of the comments that have been made here this morning.

It's funny how life treats you. Sitting around the kitchen table was referenced, and people have asked me and I've always said that that is part of our democracy, that it's your responsibility to be engaged, and that's why sitting at the kitchen table won't cut it.

I know that there were a couple of references made by the press, but one that I liked particularly was the editor of the local paper who interviewed me. In his write-up, he described me as someone who had climbed out of the crib and crawled to the right. I thought that was okay. I didn't mind that at all.

I learned so much from the people who have passed through the halls of the Ontario Legislature, the people who have sat in the seats before us. I remember walking in here for the first time as an elected person and looking around the room, and at that point—I think it was the 36th Parliament, but I might be wrong. The point is that I sat down, I looked around the room, I saw all the chairs and I thought, "This is only the 36th time that somebody has come in and sat here. That's overwhelming." And to think that I'm one of them now, and to think that each of you is one of them, and the responsibility that that carries with it—it carries with it for today and the problems that we try to wrestle with today. It also speaks to the people who have gone before us, the people who have understood the important value of this building and what it stands for and the significance, and it has never left me, I'm pleased to say. I'm pleased to say that I can walk in here 21 years later and still feel that tremendous aura of what this building represents. I think our job as MPPs is to make sure that we contribute to that so that the next generation understands the value of what's here.

One of the things that I like to quote is one where it describes the system as a wild garden that needs tending. We have the basics here, we have the garden, and our responsibility and that of our children and grandchildren is to tend that garden. On the frame of my licence plate, it says "Democracy: Don't waste it."

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A fine example for all young women and men to look forward to, in terms of what this place means. Thank you very much for your contribution.

We will make sure that we assemble the tributes and pass them on to you in full.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. I was reading a Globe and Mail editorial, and I'm going to share with you what that editorial said. According to the Premier's energy plan, "She isn't fixing the electricity ... mess. She isn't lowering the extortionate system costs created by a decade of poor choices and mismanagement of the province's power system. She's simply rigging consumers' bills during an election year."

This isn't about fixing the structural challenges. Is it just about what we all know it is, your own political survival?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What our Fair Hydro Plan is about is taking a burden off people's electricity bills all around the province. It's about making sure that people see, on average, a 25% reduction—people who are having trouble paying their rent, who are having trouble looking after their families—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —making sure that they have the relief that they need soon, that it's practical and that it's adequate. That's what our Fair Hydro Plan is about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier, and again from this Globe and Mail editorial: They said this scheme is nothing more than, "A Liberal Premier has found"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I tried just asking. Obviously, you've now maybe been trained that you have to wait for warnings. So I'm going to try to ask you one last time, when I've got all of your attention. Let's just let the question be put, and let's let the answer be put. If I have to, I will intervene again.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, obviously, this is a sensitive topic for the Liberal government.

The Globe and Mail editorial said, "A Liberal Premier has found yet another way to make Ontarians pay more for electricity, but this one is selling it as the act of a thoughtful government coming to the aid of" families.

That is exactly why I have written the Financial Accountability Officer asking for an open, transparent and honest accounting of what this is going to cost Ontarians and if the government's numbers are actually accurate.

1100

Mr. Speaker, the truth will come out eventually. Just how much debt is going to be saddled on the next generation of Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm happy to say that the office of the Financial Accountability Officer was briefed last week. We're very happy to have the FAO get the information that he needs. His office has been briefed, and we will continue to work with him. In fact, as the Leader of the Opposition knows, we actually expanded the purview of the Financial Accountability Officer so that he

could get all of the information that he wanted. So we're happy to do that.

This plan is about giving people relief on their electricity bills. It's about spreading out costs over a longer period of time, costs that have been incurred through investments in a system that was degraded, that had to be upgraded and that was susceptible to brownouts and blackouts when we came into office under the previous Premier.

We absolutely had to make the investments. We've done that. We have a clean, reliable electricity grid, and we're going to relieve people of their electricity costs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: The Globe and Mail placed the blame where it belongs. I quote from the Globe and Mail: "The blame for this falls squarely on the consecutive Liberal governments of former Premier Dalton McGuinty and his successor," the Premier of Ontario today, "in power since 2003. Their mismanagement of Ontario's power system has led to today." That's their mismanagement. Now the Liberal government—to pay for their mistakes, for their mismanagement, it's going to cost \$25 billion in additional interest costs.

We've seen Liberal math before, how it doesn't add up and how it seems to be something different afterwards. Just look at the gas plant. It was supposed to cost a cup of coffee, then it was \$40 million and then costs skyrocketed. Their numbers, historically, do not add up.

My question, Mr. Speaker: Given the fact that their math hasn't added up before, can we have the guarantee of the Premier that they will not block any information being shared with the Financial Accountability Officer?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We've already provided a technical briefing to the office of the FAO. We are happy for the Financial Accountability Officer to have the information available to his office already. It's already there, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to work with him.

Underlying the question of the Leader of the Opposition is an assumption that, had they had the opportunity, they would—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The conversation between members on each side is going to stop.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —they would not have upgraded the system, they would not have cleaned the electricity grid, and then they would not have had a plan to deal with those costs.

We've taken the responsible path. We know that the costs that people are being asked to pay are too up front. We're spreading those over a period of time. It's a 25% reduction on average. That's what we're moving forward with.

CHILDREN'S TREATMENT CENTRES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Families and supporters of Grandview's Children's

Centre rallied together on the weekend to fight for fair funding. Grandview has been waiting nine years—nine years, Mr. Speaker—and shovels have sat idly by. For nine years, children with autism have been sitting on a wait-list.

These children and their families deserve better. Her own Liberal caucus members have written to the Premier pleading for action, but the Premier's office has ignored her own caucus members. I asked about this on November 24 and I was told by the government that they were going to look into it. Here we are, months later, and nothing has happened.

My question is directly to the Premier: Will the government commit to the proper funding for the new Grandview centre, yes or no? The community in Durham is tired of waiting.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Children and Youth Services is going to want to speak to the specifics, but I just want to be very clear that in no way have I or my office ignored the commentary from, quite frankly, all of the members from Durham, but certainly from our own caucus. I know that this is a very worthwhile project, it's something that needs to move ahead and it's something that I know the Minister of Children and Youth Services will be happy to give an update on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Whitby—Oshawa.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Back to the Premier: The Grandview situation is absolutely heartbreaking: nine years of waiting, the land has been donated, \$8 million raised, and sadly, 2,753 children on the wait-list.

Mr. Speaker, how much longer must these children and families wait?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I would like to thank the member for the question. As soon as the Legislature went into recess this past winter, I made my way out to Grandview. It was one of my priorities in regard to visits. I just want to say that the centre is a remarkable place. I met with parents there and I met with staff to listen to their concerns.

We're a government that has invested, in the last several years, over \$300 million into capital programs for our children treatment centres. We have a process in place. I went out there to listen, and we're taking all of those requests for capital programs. There's a process in place, and we'll be making a decision shortly in regard to where we spend those capital dollars.

I would like to thank the member for his advocacy. We're paying attention on this side, and we'll continue to work with Grandview to make sure that we position kids for success here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Back to the Premier: Families of Grandview kids across Durham region have been waiting for approval of Grandview's project. In November 2015,

the town of Ajax announced the donation of a five-acre parcel of land for the future new headquarters of Grandview.

They are the only children's treatment centre in Durham region providing specialized programs, outpatient clinical treatment and support to thousands of children and youth with special needs and their families. They also offer ABA therapy for children with autism. Yet, over 2,700 children sit on a wait-list while this government fails to act.

Mr. Speaker, I toured Grandview just last Friday and I can say with certainty that the time to act is now. Will the Liberals announce the funding of the new Grandview centre today?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Again, I would like to thank the member for the question. She brought up funding for autism as a point in her question. The member knows that our autism funding is historically the largest investment in autism in the history of this province, if not the entire country.

So we're making inroads. We've got challenges in the system when it comes to mental health, when it comes to autism and when it comes to our children, but we're doing everything we can to make sure we position them for success. Grandview is an exceptional place doing great work. In our child treatment centres across the province, over 76,000 young people are treated each year. We're proud of that, and we know we need to build more capacity within the system. That's why we keep investing into capital programs and rebuilds for our treatment centres here in Ontario.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The Premier and the Liberals have had 14 years to fix the mess that her party has helped create in our hydro system, but it is only in the last few weeks that she has admitted that there is a problem and only last week that she admitted she could actually do something about it.

Up until she began to fear for her political life, she told Ontarians there either was no problem, or if there was, there was nothing she could do about it. The Premier told this House: Our rates "are competitive with New York, with Michigan, with Pennsylvania.... Those energy prices are competitive, Mr. Speaker." I ask the Premier, what's behind the sudden conversion?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, that's just not an accurate portrayal of the situation. The fact is that for some time, a number of years, we've been working to take costs out of the system. We renegotiated the Samsung deal. We made a decision about not building new nuclear. We were very aware that we needed to find ways to get costs out of the electricity system.

We made a decision around the 8% reduction on electricity bills—the provincial portion of the HST—last year, Mr. Speaker. It's in effect now.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, second time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We did hear from people around the province, and I knew that it was not enough. That's why we brought forward an average 25% reduction that people will see on their bills this summer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Hydro rates have been a crisis for families and businesses in Ontario for as long as the Premier has been saying there was no crisis.

It's not just the Premier who denied the problem. On September 15, 2016, the minister said, "Energy costs are in the middle of the pack when compared to other Canadian provinces. The government has used virtually all available public policy levers at our disposal to mitigate rate pressure for customers."

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When will the Premier admit how out of touch she is with Ontarians and apologize for denying over and over again that the crisis they were facing is real?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Speaker, it seems to me that a plan has been brought forward that is actually going to reduce people's electricity bills in a number of ways. First of all, an across-the-board average 25% cut for residents who pay bills—they're going to see, on average, a 25% cut. People who pay exorbitant distribution rates in rural and remote communities are going to see another 10% or 15% reduction. People who are living on low incomes are going to see an enhanced benefit, so they will see further cuts. That's a practical plan that I think demonstrates that we have understood. We've listened and we've understood.

We've brought forward a practical plan as opposed to a plan that does not respond because it would not work, which is what the NDP has brought forward. We've brought forward a plan that actually is practical and it's going to reduce people's electricity bills.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, she may forget this, but the other part of the Premier's story was that the Liberal government had no control over hydro prices, that it was all in the hands of the Ontario Energy Board. On September 29, 2016, the Minister of Energy said, "The OEB is a quasi-judicial organization that's not part of the government. They set the rates."

Clearly, the Premier does think she has control over rates, because just last week she finally decided that the political cost to her and her party of ignoring this crisis that she has created for Ontario families was just too much, and she came up with a band-aid fix. What changed, Speaker?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, for many months we have been working on finding a solution to help people with their electricity bills, whether the leader

of the third party accepts that or not is entirely beside the point.

The point is that there are people in this province who are paying too much for their electricity. They can't afford to look after themselves and their families. There are people in this province who are paying too-high distribution costs, and there are people living on low income who are not getting enough support. We are tackling all of those challenges. The relief will be in place in the summer. It will stay in place. The reality is that I am most interested in those people, in their concerns and their families.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. One part of the Premier's story that she still clings to is that selling Hydro One is a good idea, once again ignoring the wishes of the vast majority of Ontarians.

By returning Hydro One to public hands, we bring in \$7 billion over the next 30 years that we can invest in Ontario. Instead of investing in Ontario families and businesses, the Liberal plan gives away an additional \$25 billion to \$40 billion to bankers over that same period.

When will this Premier wake up and realize that continuing with her wrong-headed sell-off of Hydro One is not just vastly unpopular, it is absolutely the wrong thing to do for Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, again, we put the facts on the table. The proposal that the leader of the third party has brought forward as part of her plan—that would not work—is to stop the broadening of the ownership of Hydro One and buy back Hydro One, none of which would take one cent off one electricity bill in this province—not a penny.

What we've brought forward is a plan that will reduce people's electricity bills, Mr. Speaker. It will spread the costs over a 30-year period for an asset and for assets that are going to be used by people for that period. So it's only right, it's only fair, that people in this generation would pay part of the cost, but people who are going to be using that asset down the road would pay part of the freight for that.

That's what we're doing. We're bringing forward relief for people immediately.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberal plan will cost the people of Ontario more in the long run. That is absolutely the case. And it doesn't solve any—not a single one—of the underlying problems in our current electricity system, nor does it stop the sell-off of Hydro One.

For years, the Premier didn't listen to Ontarians when they were struggling with hydro bills that were far too high and that they could no longer afford. The Premier has not learned from that lesson.

Why isn't she listening to Ontarians who are telling her that the right thing to do is to stop putting her political career ahead of the people of this province and put an

end, once and for all, to her wrong-headed decision to sell off Hydro One, their vital public asset?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's actually hard to know where to begin. The reality is that underlying the question from the leader of the third party is an assumption that there was no need to rebuild the electricity system in Ontario: that we don't need a clean electricity grid; we don't need to build all those thousands of kilometres of line; we don't need clean, renewable capacity; and, underlying her question about Hydro One, we don't need to build transit—all of which, I think, are really surprising assertions coming from the NDP.

On top of that, the proposal that she has put forward to reduce electricity costs because of the investments that we've made—there is a cost associated with those—the proposal she's brought forward would not work, would not take money off of people's electricity bills.

We've brought forward a practical plan that will reduce people's electricity bills. That's the right thing to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What we don't need is to sell off a vital public asset that generates revenues for the people of Ontario. That's what we don't need.

People need more than a desperate attempt to hold on to political power. People need so much more than that. People need more than a plan that kicks the problems in our hydro system down to our grandkids. We need a plan that prioritizes Ontario families and businesses, because all Ontarians see that the Liberal plan is an extra \$40 billion going into the pockets of this Premier's banker friends.

When will this Premier show Ontarians that she is about more than saving her own political skin, admit that she was wrong and stop the sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've been asked a lot about this question of grandchildren and how we would explain it to our grandchildren. Well, I have three grandchildren, and I'm quite comfortable talking to Olivia, Claire and Hugh about the reality that their mom and dad need some support in order to allow them to take skating lessons or swimming lessons, allow them to do the things that they want to do for their family now. That will mean that Livvie, Claire and Hugh, when they're using those same assets, will be helping to pay for—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —that Livvie, Claire and Hugh will be helping to pay for those assets.

Mr. Speaker, for months, the leader of the third party has been looking for solutions to actually help people in their daily lives. We're bringing that forward. I would have thought she might have been supportive.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question. The member from Nipissing.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: All of their prospective new leaders all stood up.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order. Start the clock. New question?

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, and good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Rumours have surfaced regarding the employment status of the 70 men and women at the OPG facility in North Bay. In fact, these now appear to be more than rumours. OPG has refused to answer any questions from the municipality regarding—

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Hon. David Zimmer: Rumours, rumours. Facts, facts. You sound like Donald Trump.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Indigenous Relations, come to order.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: —its future in North Bay. OPG and North Bay have had more than a 100-year relationship. They have a responsibility to be open and transparent with the communities they've had partnerships with, especially those for more than a century.

If OPG is indeed transferring dozens of employees out of North Bay, why are they doing it by stealth? Speaker, I ask the Premier, does she agree that this is an outrageous failure by a publicly owned corporation to live up to the standards of accountability that are expected here in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm happy to respond on behalf of the Minister of Energy. I find it kind of passing strange that the member opposite, who is always on his feet talking about efficiencies in government and doing the right thing and allowing our crown corporations to do what they need to do to be able to keep their budgets in order, is now standing up because something happens to be happening in his riding, that now it's something that they shouldn't be doing.

My understanding, Mr. Speaker, is that there are no jobs being lost in this move, but that the senior vice-president is in North Bay today, speaking in person to the employees who are affected. I know that this is a decision that OPG takes seriously. OPG has more than 9,000 employees in every corner of this province. They're a big corporation. But the role of our government—the role of any government—is not to interfere with these human resources issues.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Premier: For weeks, OPG told the media, "We don't respond to rumours." For weeks, the city of North Bay's requests have gone unanswered. Their failure to respond has caused great concern in North Bay. Their silence is a betrayal by OPG to

behave as good corporate citizens, and their refusal to be honest tells us to no longer trust what OPG says.

If OPG is willing to turn its back on the city it has been in for 100 years and ignore the pleas of the municipality, what else will they ignore? Speaker, I ask the Premier, if OPG won't be open about their plans in North Bay, how can they be trusted to be accountable for what they say about any of their projects?

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's all about accountability. It's about giving our crown corporations the ability to manage what they're doing in the best possible way. The member is on his feet all the time talking about cutting costs, cutting salaries, and all of that stuff. The minute something happens in his riding, he wants us to go in the opposite direction.

The senior vice-president is in North Bay today. It is a sensitive issue, and it's a decision OPG takes very seriously. They'll be working very closely with the labour union representatives, as they have been all along, and they'll work hard to balance providing thousands of good jobs in Ontario while delivering low-cost energy. That's what we're trying to deliver here in Ontario. So you can't have it both ways, Mr. Speaker. You can't have it both ways.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, a question to the Premier: Over the weekend, there was a credible report that Hydro One is negotiating to purchase Toronto Hydro. There were denials, but we've heard many denials before, just like before the last election when the Premier denied that she was selling Hydro One.

This sort of deal-making is happening because this government is giving out fat tax breaks to utilities that are sold to the private sector. Why is the Premier subsidizing the privatization of public utilities like Toronto Hydro?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: As the mayor said on the weekend, there are no discussions going on between our government and the city of Toronto on this matter. I don't know where the rumours came from, but you're asking me to respond to rumours that we have no idea what the source of those rumours is from.

I think, though, the question that Ontarians want asked is: Are we getting value for the investments that we're making in our energy system? Are we getting value from the tough decisions that this government has made in terms of the Hydro One issue?

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is, the NDP now have a plan that they want to buy back, for \$4 billion, the shares of Hydro One. Where are you going to get the money to pay for the interest—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister, finish.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): One sentence.

Hon. Brad Duguid: One sentence: Where are they going to get the money to pay for the public transit that we're building in Toronto and across the province?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Back to the Premier: I remember Ed Clark's words from October 2015, when he said that Hydro One transmission should stay in public hands. The Liberal government announced six months later that they were selling off Hydro One. The Premier has given the public good reason to be cynical and skeptical when it comes to privatization in Ontario's electricity system. Will the Premier stop subsidizing the sale of public utilities to private investors?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, that question is more about arcane, outdated political philosophy than it is about running an efficient hydro system. The fact of the matter is, the issue that he is referring to—and I'll say it again: There are no discussions going on between the province and the city of Toronto about Toronto Hydro. So let's be very, very clear about that.

At the same time, we have to find ways to build public transit across this province. We have to find ways to build more roads and bridges across this province. The NDP want to go back to the days where we had a huge deficit in infrastructure. We're not going to do that. We've made tough decisions on this side of the House because we know how important it is to the people of Toronto and to the people of Ontario to build transit, to build roads, to build bridges, to build this province up and to make this economy hum. That's what we've mandated ourselves to do and that's what we're going to do.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Growth. Last week, the government took a momentous step forward in ensuring that clean, reliable energy is affordable for everyone in Ontario. That announcement, the Fair Hydro Plan, is a 25% reduction on average for all households in Ontario. No loopholes, no exceptions; just significant relief for this very important household cost. I know that this announcement will go a long way in helping families in my riding of Kitchener Centre and right across the province of Ontario.

Of course, homeowners are not the only ones in the province who are paying electricity bills. Business owners have also said that they face challenges with their monthly electricity costs. Speaker, would the minister please share with this House in what ways the government's Fair Hydro Plan is going to help businesses in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Ensuring that electricity is affordable for business is a very important part of

maintaining Ontario's strong economy. Last year, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce launched a campaign called Small Business Too Big to Ignore. It highlighted the importance of small business to Ontario's economy and some of the challenges they face. Electricity prices were one of those challenges.

I'm pleased to share that the Fair Hydro Plan for Ontario is designed to help on exactly this issue. The 25% reduction applies not only to every household in this province but to tens of thousands of small businesses as well. Everyone who pays time-of-use prices will see this benefit, regardless of whether they're a home, a farm or a small business. There is no doubt that 25% is a significant savings and will go a long way to ensuring that the cost of doing business in this important sector is still very competitive in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'd like to thank the minister for his answer. These reductions in energy bills are getting very positive reactions from Ontarians. All residential electricity customers, farms and small businesses are going to be seeing an average of 25% off their bills. This is the largest electricity price cut in Ontario's history. Low-income customers and those living in rural areas with the highest delivery charges are going to see even further reductions.

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In my riding of Kitchener Centre this past weekend, constituents I ran into at public events and even at the grocery store came up to me to tell me that they welcome the actions our government is taking. Speaker, I'd like to ask the minister: How are these initiatives going to impact the economy here in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: This government announced a bold but sensible plan to lower electricity rates for households and businesses. All businesses will see a 2% to 4% reduction in their energy costs. Many small businesses will see a 25% reduction. Those medium-sized manufacturing and food processing companies will now qualify for the industrial conservation initiative and that could save them up to about a third of their energy bill.

It's important to point out, though, Mr. Speaker, that the reason we are able to afford to do this is that the Ontario economy is doing very well. We're leading the country in job creation. We're leading the entire G7 in growth. We've now created 700 net new jobs since the recession. Our unemployment rate is at an eight-year low. This economic growth has enabled us to make these important investments to lower energy bills.

Speaker, we now have an energy system in the province that is not only clean and reliable, but also affordable.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Premier. Premier, a few weeks ago Northland Power's Kingston Generating Station was forced to close its doors, along with 18 jobs. For 20 years Northland was under contract

to the IESO, and their contract ended on January 1. They offered a new contract to sell their power at the very low rate of 5.9 cents per kilowatt hour for another five years, but this government would not purchase this clean, cheap power and they won't allow Northland to sell directly to other consumers.

Just down the road, in Bath, they're building a new generating station that has been contracted to sell power at 20 cents per kilowatt hour. Just across the water on Amherst Island, they're building wind turbines that are contracted at over 20 cents per kilowatt hour.

Why does the Premier insist on shutting down clean, low-cost electrical generating stations and make Ontario buy the most expensive electricity—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Ironically, the particular contract the member is talking about was signed during the Conservative government. You know what, Mr. Speaker? What that contract did is, it meant that generators did run around the clock, creating excess greenhouse gas emissions and operating at uncompetitive prices.

Under the updated contracts, these facilities will only choose to produce power when they can compete with other forms of generation in Ontario's electricity market. The replacement contracts will result in ratepayer savings of up to \$53 million.

Mr. Steve Clark: That's hilarious.

Hon. Brad Duguid: They laugh at savings, but that's how we're able to continue to drive down energy rates in this province. We're going to keep working at bringing savings in the energy system, even if the PC—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings will come to order. The member from Renfrew, second time. I'm just keeping up my memory of who was heckling.

Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Again to the Premier: I will say, Speaker, that that response was nothing but poppycock from the minister. This Premier has stated that she has made mistakes, and that's clearly an understatement. This latest screw-up demonstrates that the Premier continues to make the same mistakes and has not learned any lessons.

The Premier continues to build expensive, unneeded generating stations while she closes down low-cost existing generating stations. The Premier throws people out of work while increasing the cost of electricity and adds billions to our debt.

Ontario is becoming an energy wasteland under this government: mothballed generating stations, energy poverty, 600,000 consumers who can't pay their monthly bills, and the Premier's solution is to turn Ontario into a subprime debtor with multiple subprime loan mortgages.

Speaker, will the Premier commit to ending these generating plants, not only in Bath and Amherst Island, but everywhere in this province?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Speaker, it's funny. There was a time when the PCs used to talk about trying to cut energy costs. Today, they're asking question after question about ways to increase costs within the energy system.

We're not going to apologize for finding savings in our energy system. That's how we're able to lower energy rates for the people of this province—a 25% cut in energy rates for every household in this province because we're doing what we need to do to make our energy system as efficient as we possibly can.

There's still a lot of work to do. We're in the process of replacing 80% of the infrastructure in our energy system. We're well on the way to doing it. We've had to expend about \$50 billion for the last 10 years to do that—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know the member wants to listen instead of heckle while he's hearing the answer. I know.

New question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. A few weeks ago, Metrolinx provided an update to its fare integration process. Metrolinx is now looking at basing transit fares in the GTA on fare by distance, like a private taxi company. It's becoming clear that the government's fare integration process is not about transit service, ridership or the public good. This is about imposing more costs onto riders, especially TTC riders living in places like Scarborough, North York and Etobicoke.

Instead of imposing more costs onto riders, will the Premier restore provincial funding for municipal transit operations, as the city of Toronto and the NDP have proposed?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member for the question. I think that member knows that, in fact, what Metrolinx has done is put forward four separate concepts or ideas for the fare integration discussion. I should note that in 2014 the mandate letter I received from the Premier stipulated that moving forward with delivering on fare integration is a critical part of the Ministry of Transportation's mandate. I think all members from the greater Toronto and Hamilton area would know that, in fact, providing that notion of integrating the fare system, which is set with respect to the table being set by the Presto fare card fully deployed right across the greater Toronto and Hamilton area—that we are moving towards that fare integration concept.

To the member's question: That is simply one of four concepts that is being consulted upon. Metrolinx looks forward to getting back with respect to the feedback, and we'll have an update in coming months.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This question is again back to the Premier. Because Metrolinx's fare integration process keeps getting more complicated and more convoluted—

the minister will know that. Taxi-style transit fares are about helping the government cut costs by imposing those costs onto the riders who rely on transit most. Riders don't want complicated fares, where they need a calculator, a ruler and a map to figure out how much it's going to cost to get to work. They want a simple and affordable fare that lets them travel across the region.

Will the Premier guarantee to put riders and the public interest first, and restore funding for municipal transit operations, as the NDP has proposed, or not? Yes or no?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member for the follow-up. I can say very clearly in this House that making sure that we take into account the affordability and accessibility concerns of transit users across the region is very much top of mind for Metrolinx and for our team at MTO, and we'll continue to keep that top of mind.

But really and truly, that member should know, a number of weeks ago, the Premier announced that over the next four years, our government will be doubling the gas tax money that the city of Toronto, all 905 communities and, frankly, nearly 100 communities across the province of Toronto that have transit systems will be receiving. That means that by 2021, the city of Toronto will be receiving approximately \$340 million from this government to support the expansion of transit.

Interestingly, the leader of the NDP's plan to provide transit funding support for Toronto does nothing for the 98 other communities across the province, like Ottawa, like Waterloo, like Vaughan, that have transit systems and need our help as well.

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DÉVELOPPEMENT ÉCONOMIQUE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Ma question est pour le ministre des Affaires municipales.

Je comprends que le maire d'Ottawa, Jim Watson, est à Queen's Park aujourd'hui. Il est accompagné d'une délégation impressionnante de l'élite du monde technologique d'Ottawa.

Mayor Watson has been an advocate for municipal affairs as both a mayor and also as a former Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Today, he is speaking with the Premier about local priorities in Ottawa. I know that this is part of an ongoing conversation that our government has with municipalities, including the AMO roundtable and several annual conferences like ROMA and OGRA in which I had an occasion to participate.

Local governments play an important role in our communities, in our day-to-day lives, and I want to salute all the workers around the province who make our communities work better for us, and particularly the workers of Ottawa-Vanier.

Can the Minister of Municipal Affairs elaborate on how as a province we support local priorities and municipal governments?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member very much for the question, and I know the Minister of Economic Development and Growth is going to want to weigh in on the second half of this. I do want to give a shout-out to the mayor of Ottawa, Jim Watson, who previously was here in this capacity, my capacity that I now have as the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Jim was responsible in large part for the upload agreement that is now in effect in the province of Ontario that resulted in the province taking significant financial pressure off of the backs of municipalities.

Speaker, I think it bears repeating, when we talk about uploads in our ministry and from our government, that people at the residential property tax base level really understand what this has meant for them over the course of the last 10 or 12 years. We now transfer \$4 billion in total financial assistance to all 444 municipalities in the province of Ontario, in some way, shape or form. That, Speaker, is up from \$1.1 billion in 2003. Fully \$3 billion more is now being transferred to municipalities to provide relief for them at the municipal property tax level.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: I would like to thank the minister for his answer. I was pleased as well to join with my colleagues this morning as we met with a large delegation of community leaders from Ottawa, led by Mayor Watson and Sir Terry Matthews. This morning, we learned about the groundbreaking work that is being done in 5G networks and autonomous cars in our community. We learned—some of us already knew—that Ottawa is home to the largest technology park in Canada, with some 30,000 employees in 500 companies. We also learned, very interestingly, about the collaborative effort of companies working together as a region to make sure they could stimulate innovation and compete in the world.

Speaker, I know the delegation is meeting with many ministers today, so I would just like to ask the minister if he could speak to our commitment to investing in Ottawa's technology sector.

Hon. Bill Mauro: The Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for Ottawa South for that question. I think he had trouble containing his enthusiasm, and I don't blame him, and when I hear from my colleague next to me here, the Minister of Infrastructure, and they tell us about the exciting things happening in Ottawa, I think we can declare today that there's a renaissance going on in Ottawa's tech community that we haven't seen since the high days of Nortel. It is so, so exciting, Mr. Speaker.

I'm looking forward to meeting with Mayor Watson as well and his very impressive delegation. But I can tell you that Ottawa is fast becoming a leading global innovation hub for exciting, disruptive technologies like 5G and new generation networks, as well as connected autonomous cars. They already are a global leader when it comes to cyber security, and companies like QNX are just knocking the socks off the rest of the world when it

comes to connected cars and autonomous cars. That region is alive, healthy and experiencing a renaissance. I'm very proud of that.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The Grove is a 60-bed nursing home in Arnprior, servicing approximately 30,000 residents. Its licences expire in 2025. It must re-develop, but it is not feasible with only 60 bed licences. Without additional licences, the Grove will close, leaving an area with already half the provincial average of beds per 1,000 with no beds at all. On top of that, from May 2015 to May 2016, the Grove saw a 30% increase in its wait-list. The problem is getting worse, not better.

Speaker, the situation is becoming critical. The good news is that Arnprior Regional Health has a redevelopment plan to address this chronic shortage. What they are asking for is for the minister to personally meet with them to discuss their redevelopment plan. Will the minister agree to take the meeting?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. We've actually spoken a number of times about this issue with regard to Arnprior and District Nursing Home, affectionately known as The Grove. He's been a strong advocate for the redevelopment that they are both eligible for and in the process of undertaking.

It's important to recognize that this is part of a larger redevelopment of 30,000 long-term-care beds across the province, to bring more than 300 homes up to code so the design standards are appropriate for this day and age.

But with regard to Grove, I have to say that my office has been deeply involved—not just the ministry—both in capital, as well as in the long-term-care division, but my office specifically has held two meetings, had a number of phone calls with the president and CEO of Grove. We believe we're working collaboratively. We want that collaboration to continue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the minister: I have well over 1,000 individually signed postcards calling on the minister to act. I will send these down with the page.

Minister, the community sees this as a highest priority project. To be fair, your ministry has been working with Arnprior Regional Health, but no acceptable outcome has been achieved. With an aging population, longer life expectancies and an explosion in rates of dementia and Alzheimer's, the minister knows that the status quo will not do. A solution must be found. For the good of our seniors and the people of Arnprior, we need the minister to step up.

Speaker, once again—and I hope you'll answer the question directly, minister—will you commit to personally meeting with Arnprior Regional Health and community leaders to discuss this most important redevelopment plan? Please, meet with the people.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I was looking for something that would help to make it easier, so I don't have to look down.

I appreciate receiving—from any member, Mr. Speaker—postcards and petitions and information that allow me to understand the level of community support. There's no doubt, when it comes to The Grove, that this is such a well-respected and loved home for so many of the seniors in that part of our province.

I believe Eric Hanna, who's president and CEO of Arnprior Regional Health, which is the operator of the long-term-care home, would agree with me in saying that we are working very closely, extremely collaboratively as well. As I referenced, my office is directly involved through meetings, through phone calls to the ministry—through two divisions within the ministry as well.

Of course, if it's necessary to have additional meetings, including with myself, in order to reach the accommodation that I think we all share in terms of this redevelopment, I'm prepared to do that.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. On Saturday, I met with Mayor Ted Hicks of Desbarats. Mayor Hicks told me he fears having to close his community's arena due to hydro bills so out of control that they now account for 40% of his operating costs. The next generation will lose out if the Desbarats rink collapses under the weight of the Liberal government's out-of-control hydro bills.

Why won't the Premier prioritize places like Desbarats Arena and the families that use it instead of coming up with a plan that puts \$40 billion in the pockets of a few of her well-connected banker friends?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Last week, we put out a plan that's going to save every household in this province 25% off their energy bills, as well as small businesses, as well as farms. We're very proud of that plan.

Also about a week ago, the NDP came out with something they called a plan that people dissed as something that wasn't even close to sensible or a plan at all. In fact, their plan relied only on federal generosity and future expert panels with nothing concrete at all as to how they would actually reduce energy costs, with nothing concrete at all as to how they would bring down energy prices.

Our plan has substance. Our plan is bold. Our plan reduces energy rates by 25% across this province, and we're very, very proud of that plan.

1150

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I don't think I've ever heard anything more ridiculous in this House, Speaker.

Nonetheless, it isn't just the mayor of Desbarats who's worried for his community hub. I've met with leaders and mayors from Echo Bay, Bruce Mines, Hilton Beach, St. Joseph and Batchewana First Nation, and all of them told me how families and community spaces in their towns are struggling to keep up with astronomically high hydro bills.

Why doesn't this Premier understand that these leaders need more from her than a plan that puts \$40 billion into the pockets of bankers on Bay Street and ignores real, long-term solutions that could help people now, and make sure that the next generation isn't thrown right back into this mess?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, when you look at our record of supporting our municipalities, it is unprecedented. When you look at the infrastructure investments that we've made with our municipalities in some of those areas that the member is talking about—unprecedented.

We're investing \$160 billion in infrastructure over the next 12 years. That's a significant impact on our municipalities and all the services that they provide. We've uploaded billions of dollars from the municipal tax rolls to help our municipalities thrive and benefit.

When the member says that we're not helping municipalities, she is dead wrong. We're there for municipalities, we'll always be there for municipalities, and we'll continue to be in the future.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Speaker, 2016 was an exciting year for transit in Barrie. In August, I welcomed the Premier and the Prime Minister to my community to announce the new Public Transportation Infrastructure Fund. This joint funding from our government and the federal government is helping Barrie expand its bus fleet and provide better service in our community. In December, the Minister of Transportation joined me for another exciting announcement: new weekend and holiday GO service to Barrie.

But I know that there's more that we can do to make sure Barrie's transit network is meeting the needs of our community for today and for tomorrow. Will the minister please provide an update on what else the government is doing to support transit in my community of Barrie?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Of course, I want to begin by saying to this House, to everybody watching at home, that the member from Barrie is such an extraordinary champion for her community. She has literally held my feet to the fire to make sure that, not just this year but for the next 10 years and beyond, we continue to make critical investments into transit that that fast-growing community needs. I applaud that member for being an outstanding champion.

She's 100% right. Whether we're talking about extending weekend and holiday service year-round on the Barrie GO line, whether we're talking about critical highway infrastructure projects around the widening of Highway 400, or whether we're talking about what I referenced just a few minutes ago in this House: the fact that, over the next four years, because of Premier Wynne's leadership, we are going to be doubling the gas tax money specifically for Barrie. That means that, by 2021-22, Barrie can expect to receive approximately \$4 million, buying more buses, providing more service for more

families in more neighbourhoods, thanks to our Premier and the member from Barrie for championing her community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thanks to the minister for that answer. When I talk to members of my community, one thing that always comes across loud and clear is that they're looking for improved transit options. I recently heard from a community member who's a single parent without a car. Each and every day, they depend on Barrie Transit to move between work, their child's school, the grocery store and eventually back home. That's stressful, even if you do have a car.

But I know this story isn't unique, and that any improvements that makes these daily tasks easier for members of my community is a worthwhile investment. Mr. Speaker, will the minister please explain how the new gas tax funding will improve transit in Barrie and other communities across this province?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Again, I thank that member for her follow-up question. I think everybody here knows that, when our government collects gas tax monies from across the province, we currently allocate two cents of what we collect out to municipalities. Over the next four years, that two cents will move up to four cents incrementally.

Here's the best news for people in Barrie and right across Ontario: That additional four cents of the gas tax that we're allocating to Barrie and the 98 other communities that have transit systems will not place any additional burden on people in this province, Speaker. We are not increasing the gas tax. We are simply showing the leadership to support transit by allocating more of the money that we already collect.

In Barrie, again, that means more buses potentially providing more transit service to more families in more neighbourhoods, which is exceedingly exciting for that member, for her community, for her mayor, and for so many others.

I would certainly hope that members in both the Conservative caucus and the NDP caucus would understand that this is an enlightened approach to expanding transit to every corner of Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question.

RING OF FIRE

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Premier. The current government has been in power since the Ring of Fire was first discovered. At various points in the past five years, this government has been quick to try to take credit, but to date we are still waiting for a mine to open in the region.

Noront is ready to get a nickel mine up and running with an eye to future expansion. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce estimates that 5,500 jobs will be created if the project is brought into production.

Speaker, I've asked this question repeatedly over the past three years: Will this government finally take a

leadership role that will make the Ring of Fire a reality in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Speaker, thank you very much for the question. I understand why the member would ask it today. The PDAC conference is currently on here in Toronto. I want to give a big shout-out before I respond to the member. We had a great Ontario reception last night down at Steam Whistle. It was a great event.

I would say—and the reason I reference that, Speaker—that when I was there, I had an opportunity to speak with Noront. While I would not necessarily characterize their position right now—what would be the language best to describe it? I would say they're optimistic. I had, I'd say, at least 15 minutes with the principal from Noront last night. There's more that I can add in the supplementary, but they do see a path forward. I had a great opportunity to spend some time talking to the principal from Noront last night. We're very happy with where this is at right now.

We understand there's more work to be done, Speaker. We're committed to it. They know we've got \$1 billion on the table. We're committed to the work, and I look forward to working further on this file in the weeks and months ahead.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Norm Miller: Again to the Premier: Speaker, the minister continues to insist that progress is being made. Unfortunately we are still waiting for evidence of those claims. When is someone over there going to make some decisions to move things forward?

The known deposits in the region could sustain producing mines in the region for over 100 years.

In the mandate letter to the minister from this past September, roadwork to upgrade existing infrastructure and connect the Ring of Fire is to commence. Speaker, does the Premier plan to meet this important target or simply continue to make promises until after the 2018 election?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Yes, in fact, progress is being made. If the member opposite and the parties opposite want to speak about progress in mining in the province of Ontario in the context of only one project, then that will be what they can do.

What we can do on this side of the House is talk about the fact that currently in Ontario, there are three other mines under construction in the province. But they want to spend their time focusing on one. There's one not too far from my home community of Thunder Bay called the New Gold project. Speaker, right now it's under construction and 600 people are working on a construction site. When that mine is open for the next 10, 20 or 30 years of its life, there are going to be 450 people working in that mine. And that is not the only mine that is under construction right now in the province of Ontario.

Mineral exploration activity in the province of Ontario is climbing after two down years. Global demand is coming back up. The price is coming back up. Exploration activity in Ontario is going up. There's good

news on the front, but they just want to focus on one particular project.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Add Bill Mauro's name to the list. He wants on the list, too.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Even before a vote, it's never too late to be asked to leave.

The member from Leeds–Grenville on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: Yes, a point of order, Speaker: I would like to introduce and acknowledge the birthday of a very special staff person in our legislative affairs team, Cody Welton. Happy birthday, Cody.

VISITOR

Mr. Arthur Potts: A point of order: My apologies; I just recognized a constituent in the public gallery, Steven Crombie. Welcome to Queen's Park.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Brad Duguid: I just want to correct my record. I was told I said that we've created 700 jobs since the recession. It's 700,000 jobs, Mr. Speaker.

DEFERRED VOTES

SCHOOL BOARDS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AMENDMENT ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 92, An Act to amend the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2014 and make related amendments to other statutes / Projet de loi 92, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2014 sur la négociation collective dans les conseils scolaires et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1200 to 1205.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On February 23, 2017, Ms. Hunter moved second reading of Bill 92, An Act to amend the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2014 and make related amendments to other statutes. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Anderson, Granville
Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert

Duguid, Brad
Fedeli, Victor
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fraser, John

Milczyn, Peter Z.
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Murray, Glen R.

Baker, Yvan	Hardeman, Ernie	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Ballard, Chris	Hoggarth, Ann	Naqvi, Yasir
Barrett, Toby	Hoskins, Eric	Nicholls, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hunter, Mitzie	Pettapiece, Randy
Bradley, James J.	Jones, Sylvia	Potts, Arthur
Brown, Patrick	Kiwala, Sophie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chan, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Rinaldi, Lou
Chiarelli, Bob	Lalonde, Marie-France	Sandals, Liz
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Leal, Jeff	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	MacCharles, Tracy	Smith, Todd
Coe, Lorne	MacLaren, Jack	Sousa, Charles
Colle, Mike	Malhi, Harinder	Takhar, Harinder S.
Coteau, Michael	Mangat, Amrit	Vernile, Daiene
Crack, Grant	Martins, Cristina	Walker, Bill
Damerla, Dipika	Martow, Gila	Wilson, Jim
Del Duca, Steven	Matthews, Deborah	Wong, Soo
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	McDonnell, Jim	Yakabuski, John
Dhillon, Vic	McGarry, Kathryn	Yurek, Jeff
Dickson, Joe	McMahon, Eleanor	Zimmer, David
Dong, Han	McMeekin, Ted	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays		
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gates, Wayne	Sattler, Peggy
Bisson, Gilles	Gélinas, France	Singh, Jagmeet
DiNovo, Cheri	Gretzky, Lisa	Tabuns, Peter
Fife, Catherine	Hatfield, Percy	Taylor, Monique
Forster, Cindy	Horwath, Andrea	Vanthof, John
French, Jennifer K.	Mantha, Michael	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 74; the nays are 17.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated March 2, 2017, the bill is now referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1209 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

STEAM CENTRE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to take this opportunity to highlight the STEAM Centre, which is located in St. Thomas. STEAM is an acronym that stands for science, technology, engineering, art and math. The mission of the STEAM Centre is to empower all learners and makers to create the future through play, ingenuity and exploration, using the science and math tools they have acquired.

The centre delivers a comprehensive educational model focused on developing the creativity and problem-solving that is necessary to explore ideas and foster growth. The STEAM Centre creates innovative curriculums for teachers and provides workshops for all ages and learners. They also provide a collaborative space where the public can access 3D printing, computer num-

erical controls and other STEAM tools to work on projects and activities.

The centre has countless programs for youth, adults and educators. There's a variety of workshops for youth such as day camps, summer camps, kids coding, kid roboteers, 3D printing and design classes, and teen video-game coding and design. The learning doesn't stop there. They also offer a variety of workshops for adults as well.

With the increasing need for science, math and technology skills across the province today, the STEAM Centre is a terrific asset to our community. Thanks to the partnership of the Thames Valley District School Board, the city of St. Thomas and the Dorothy Palmer estate, which has given millions of dollars throughout our community, St. Thomas Elgin is proud to call this education centre home.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: On October 19, 2016, the Minister of Health was asked why the people of London must wait longer for orthopaedic surgery than other Ontarians. He said, "I am working with the South West LHIN, with the hospitals involved in the London area as well, and I expect in the very near future we will have arrived at a solution."

Well, Speaker, five months later, wait times in London are still unacceptably long. My office continues to be inundated with complaints from people who are waiting months and even years for surgery. The ministry's own wait times website shows that Londoners wait 35% longer than the provincial average, and that's after their initial consultation, which often takes months to secure.

It is clear that wait times in London are not a priority for this government. Underfunding and arbitrary caps on the number of surgeries that can be performed have resulted in specialists closing their offices even as hospital operating rooms sit empty.

We are at a critical moment. If the minister will not take action, I will. Earlier this year, I wrote to the Patient Ombudsman to urge an investigation by her office, presenting her with a long list of examples of Londoners who are suffering. Whether she investigates or not, you can be sure that I will continue to raise this issue in the Legislature. My constituents deserve more than empty promises; they deserve real solutions.

MULTIFAIR 2017

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: Last week I had the pleasure of attending the Multicultural Canadian Fair and Trade Show 2017, organized by the Young Professional and Skilled Workers Association in Etobicoke-Lakeshore. This is a not-for-profit, community-based organization in south Etobicoke which offers young professionals from different ethnic communities and skilled workers and apprentices throughout the GTA opportunities to network, socialize and expand their professional horizons.

The sold-out Canadian fair and trade show brought together culture, arts and various ethnic organizations and businesses for a day of networking and understanding.

The fair also celebrated the contributions of multicultural leaders and their organizations towards the success of a diverse social and business environment here in Ontario. I enjoyed meeting a variety of the exhibitors, from Humber College to the various international chambers of commerce and local businesses. I also had the opportunity to participate in a panel discussion focusing on the best practices for how business could engage with different levels of government.

Mr. Speaker, a trade show is one of the best ways to highlight various organizations and groups and stimulate networking among them. The goals of this particular event were to improve networking, especially among multicultural groups, and ensure that there are more business opportunities for all Ontarians. I want to congratulate the members of the Young Professionals and Skilled Workers Association for organizing such a successful event, and I look forward to their event in 2018.

LAMBTON COLLEGE

Mr. Robert Bailey: One of the seminal moments in the history of our great province was the creation of the provincial college system in 1965 by the Progressive Conservative government and the then Minister of Education, the Honourable William G. Davis. As a result, on April 5, 2017, Lambton College in my riding of Sarnia-Lambton will celebrate its 50th anniversary. Established in 1966 and the second-oldest college in Ontario, Lambton College began with just four programs and 54 students at the original Bluewater campus. Today, Lambton College offers more than 90 diploma, certificate and degree programs and is globally recognized as a post-secondary leader in education, training and research. In fact, Lambton College was recently named the top research college in Ontario by RESEARCH Infosource Inc.

In honour of its semi-centennial anniversary, Lambton College will be hosting the president's gala on May 13 in Sarnia. Among the guests that evening will be keynote speaker Canadian funnyman Rick Mercer, and the Honourable William G. Davis, former Premier and Minister of Education for the province of Ontario. Mr. Davis actually laid the cornerstone of the college's main building at an event in 1970. It will be a special moment for Lambton College and one I look forward to celebrating with them.

Congratulations to all the staff and students of Lambton College on your golden anniversary. There's no doubt in my mind this anniversary is just the start of something amazing.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The reality in this province is that far too many workers are forced to work through

temporary job agencies. They cannot find permanent employment in this province. The problem isn't that a temporary job agency connects workers with employment. The problem is that people working through these temporary agencies are often seeing their salaries clawed back, and as much as 40% of their salary is clawed back by the temporary agency. Mr. Speaker, this is simply unfair.

On top of that, workers who work through a temporary job agency do not receive benefits. This is unacceptable. This Liberal government has known about this problem for years. For over a decade, they have allowed this problem to not only continue but to flourish. It is simply unacceptable that people working beside a fellow colleague do not receive equal pay for equal work. That's why I am calling on this government to ensure that this policy, this practice that is so hurtful, does not continue.

We need to ensure that we have a province where workers receive equal pay for equal work. If you are working through a temporary job agency, you should not see any of your pay clawed back. In addition, you should receive full benefits. That is a minimum. That is a requirement that we should have in this province. I call on this government to implement a policy to ensure that people receive the fairness that they deserve.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Over the course of this weekend, I had the opportunity to talk to many of my neighbours and friends in Brampton-Springdale, and they are all so excited about the new electricity bill reduction of 25% that they will be seeing in the summer. Many small businesses will benefit from this cut as a part of the fair hydro plan that has been announced by Premier Wynne and Minister Thibeault this week. Bills won't increase beyond the rate of inflation for at least four years. We are bringing hydro rates down by 25% and fixing the system's structure. It is better for Ontarians, it is better for Ontario and it is more fair for families.

Since the announcement last week, residents from other parts of the region of Peel that I have met at events that I attended all wanted to discuss this great new reduction, and they are looking forward to seeing this reduction on their bills.

We all understand that electricity is a necessity, and that's why we're working to make it more fair and affordable for Ontarians. By fixing problems in the system, we will be able to provide every residential customer in Ontario with an average of 25% off their bill. People who live in eligible rural communities and those with low incomes will see even more reductions in their electricity bills. Now available to even more low-income electricity consumers, consumers are able to apply online to receive \$360 to \$425 off per year on their bills through the OESP.

Taken together, these changes will deliver the single largest reduction to electricity rates in Ontario's history.

All residents are able to find out how much they will save on their monthly electricity bill and learn more about programs and tax credits to help lower their bill.

1310

CITY OF TORONTO

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Today we celebrate the 183rd anniversary of the incorporation of the city of Toronto.

Of course, Toronto is a little bit older than that. The Wyandot people were perhaps the first to live in the area of Toronto. They had a settlement on the banks of the Humber River. In 1750, the French established a trading post on the site of what are now the Exhibition grounds in Toronto. Not long after that, French North America was conquered by the British, and the site of Toronto became the capital of the province of Upper Canada.

Since then, Toronto has always had an important role in Canadian history. Toronto welcomed the Loyalists fleeing persecution after the American Revolution. Toronto survived the War of 1812. The Rebellions of 1837 failed to shake Canadians' attachment to the crown. And Sir John A. Macdonald's vision of a transcontinental parliamentary monarchy was first developed in Toronto.

When the writer Charles Dickens toured British North America in the 1840s, he found Toronto a vibrant and exciting place. Now, at the beginning of the 21st century, Toronto is one of the most populous and dynamic cities in North America.

Here's to many more centuries of greatness, and happy birthday to Toronto.

OUR CANADA MOSAIC

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: A few months ago, Pat Guinn from the BaySide Artists approached me with a wonderful and creative idea to help celebrate our nation's 150th birthday. These artists created an exhibit entitled *Our Canada*, an impressive piece which dominates every wall it occupies. The mosaic consists of 16 12-by-12-inch paintings. Each tile tells its own story about a specific person or landscape. When viewed together, the piece conveys a moving statement about the journey of our great nation from 1867 to today.

One of the inspirational people seen in the mosaic is Terry Fox. There's a special local connection to Terry. Thirty-seven years ago, he made his way through Barrie on his Marathon of Hope to raise funds for cancer research. On October 13, 1980, our city became the first in the nation to host the Terry Fox Run in his memory and encouraged other cities to do so.

Other paintings in the mosaic recognize Nellie McClung, Roberta Bondar, and lines from John McCrae's poem *In Flanders Fields*.

After it having been showcased from Springwater all the way to Milton, I am fortunate to have the BaySide Artists hang this beautiful mosaic in my constituency office for the month of March. I would like to invite all members to visit my office in Barrie to see this magnifi-

cent piece of art and to celebrate Ontario150 with team Hoggarth.

Congratulations to the BaySide Artists on a magnificent tribute to Canada's history.

TOBACCO GROWERS

Mr. Toby Barrett: Ontario's tobacco growers are fed up with government's mismanagement of the industry.

In 2015, the Ontario government took over the former tobacco board's licensing duties, and today the Ministry of Finance has the authority to directly hand out licences to growers and buyers, rather than the board acting as the agent. The ministry also has the right to attend a tobacco farm to conduct surprise inspections. As a result, growers feel like criminals, because this is the government's strategy on illegal tobacco, and they do ask the Minister of Finance and the Premier to stop picking the low-hanging fruit. The majority of tobacco farmers are hard-working, law-abiding citizens. They want to be left alone to farm.

Prior to Christmas, many growers were hit with a \$2,500 fine for overplanting, and, without the details, this government would know those fines are unjust.

A few weeks ago, the Ministry of Finance held an information session with growers. The meeting was long overdue. They expressed that the ministry is making up rules on the fly and that those rules change depending on who shows up to inspect their farm.

Tobacco growers are not bureaucrats. They are not criminals. Government has allowed contraband to spiral out of control. It's up to all of us to identify illegal tobacco as a problem and to fix it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HONOURING OUR VETERANS

ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 RENDANT HOMMAGE À NOS ANCIENS COMBATTANTS

Mr. MacLaren moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 100, An Act respecting identification for veterans / Projet de loi 100, Loi concernant l'identification des anciens combattants.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: This bill enacts the Honouring our Veterans Act, 2017. The act provides that an individual may request to be identified as a veteran on his or her driver's licence or photo card. It means that the word "veteran," highlighted with a bright yellow band,

would be on a driver's licence to identify veterans out of respect for their service to this country.

PETITIONS

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas under the current Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline (PARG), one in eight Ontario schools is at risk of closure; and

"Whereas the value of a school to the local economy and community has been removed from the PARG; and

"Whereas the PARG outlines consultation requirements that are insufficient to allow for meaningful community involvement, including the establishment of community hubs; and

"Whereas school closures have a significant negative impact on families and their children, resulting in inequitable access to extracurricular activities and other essential school involvement, and after-school work opportunities; and

"Whereas school closures have devastating impacts on the growth and overall viability of communities across Ontario, in particular self-sustaining agricultural communities;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To place a moratorium on all school closures across Ontario and to suspend all pupil accommodation reviews until the PARG has been subject to a substantive review by an all-party committee that will examine the effects of extensive school closures on the health of our communities and children."

I fully support this, and will affix my name and send it with page McGowan.

GRANDVIEW CHILDREN'S CENTRE

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition here from the folks in Oshawa and across Durham region.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Grandview Children's Centre is Durham region's only outpatient rehabilitation facility for children and youth with special needs; and

"Whereas Grandview Children's Centre's main facility was originally constructed in 1983 to serve 400 children and now has a demand of over 8,000 children annually; and

"Whereas growth has resulted in the need for lease locations leading to inefficient and fragmented care delivery; and

"Whereas it is crucial for Grandview Children's Centre to complete a major development project to construct a new facility in order to meet the existing as well as future needs of Durham region's children, youth and families; and

"Whereas in 2009 Grandview Children's Centre submitted a capital development plan to the province to construct a new facility; and

"Whereas in 2016 the town of Ajax donated a parcel of land on which to build the new Grandview; and

"Whereas the Grandview foundation has raised over \$8 million; and

"Whereas since 2009 the need for services has continued to increase, with over 2,753 children, youth and families currently on the wait-list for services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario prioritizes, commits to and approves Grandview Children's Centre's capital development plan so that the chronic shortage of facilities in Durham can be alleviated."

I wholeheartedly support this, affix my name to it and will send it with page Luca.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Harinder Malhi: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas electricity prices have increased and in too many cases become unaffordable for Ontarians;

"Whereas Ontario is a prosperous province and people should never have to choose between hydro and other daily necessities;...

"Whereas the Ontario fair hydro plan would reduce hydro bills for residential consumers, small businesses and farms by an average of 25% as part of a significant system restructuring, with increases held to the rate of inflation for the next four years;

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"Whereas the Ontario fair hydro plan would provide people with low incomes and those living in rural communities with even greater reductions to their electricity bills;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the Ontario fair hydro plan and provide relief for Ontario electricity consumers as quickly as possible;

"Continue working to ensure clean, reliable and affordable electricity is available for all Ontarians."

I will sign my name to this petition and hand it over to Azaria.

ANTI-SMOKING INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I have a petition delivered to me by Lyndsay O'Donnell of public health unit Stratford, and Nicki Van Bakel and Rachel Klaver, a couple of young students in Stratford.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas in the past 10 years in Ontario, 86% of all movies with on-screen smoking were rated for youth;

"The tobacco industry has a long, well-documented history of promoting tobacco use on-screen;

"A scientific report released by the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit estimated that 185,000 children in Ontario today will be recruited to smoking by exposure to on-screen smoking;

"More the 59,000 will eventually die from tobacco-related cancers, strokes, heart disease and emphysema, incurring at least \$1.1 billion in health care costs; and

"Whereas an adult rating (18A) for movies that promote on-screen tobacco in Ontario would save at least 30,000 lives and half a billion health care dollars;

"The Ontario government has a stated goal to achieve the lowest smoking rates in Canada;

"79% of Ontarians support not allowing smoking in movies rated G, PG, 14A (increased from 73% in 2011);

"The Minister of Government and Consumer Services has the authority to amend the regulations of the Film Classification Act via cabinet;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To request the Standing Committee on Government Agencies examine the ways in which the regulations of the Film Classification Act could be amended to reduce smoking in youth-rated films released in Ontario;

"That the committee report back on its findings to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and that the Minister of Government and Consumer Services prepare a response."

KOMOKA PROVINCIAL PARK

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition signed by citizens of London and the surrounding area, bringing the total number of signatures to over 1,500. The petition is entitled "Remove the new fees from Komoka Provincial Park."

"Whereas Komoka Provincial Park has long served residents and visitors to London, offering free access to beautiful views and numerous recreational hiking trails; and

"Whereas evidence has shown that access to the natural environment helps to reduce stress, improve mental well-being, and lower risks for chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart attacks and cancer; and

"Whereas new parking fees ranging from \$5.75 to \$14.50 for daily use of Komoka Provincial Park have been imposed without consultation and without additional amenities to justify the new costs, appearing to be simply a cash grab by the Liberal government; and

"Whereas the lack of bike lanes and bus routes connecting Komoka Provincial Park to London, and the prohibition on roadside parking, requires almost all visitors to drive to the park and pay to park their vehicles; and

"Whereas the new fees are likely to decrease park visits with negative consequences for community health and well-being;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry eliminate the parking fees introduced in August 2016 to

ensure that Komoka Provincial Park remains accessible to residents of the city of London and all Ontarians."

I fully support this petition, affix my name and will give it to page Benjamin.

NANJING MASSACRE

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly, and I want to thank the constituents from Brampton, Hamilton, Guelph, Kitchener, Mississauga and Sarnia.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the events in Asian countries during World War II are not well-known;

"Whereas Ontarians have not had an opportunity for a thorough discussion and examination of the World War II atrocities in Asia;

"Whereas Ontarians are unfamiliar with the World War II atrocities in Asia;

"Whereas Ontario is recognized as an inclusive society;

"Whereas Ontario is the home to one of the largest Asian populations in Canada, with over 2.6 million in 2011;

"Whereas some Ontarians have direct relationships with victims and survivors of the Nanjing Massacre, whose stories are untold;

"Whereas the Nanjing Massacre was an atrocity with over 200,000 Chinese civilians and soldiers alike were indiscriminately killed, and tens of thousands of women were sexually assaulted, in the Japanese capture of the city;

"Whereas December 13, 2017, marks the 80th anniversary of the Nanjing Massacre;

"Whereas designating December 13th in each year as the Nanjing Massacre Commemorative Day in Ontario will provide an opportunity for all Ontarians, especially the Asian community, to gather, remember, and honour the victims and families affected by the Nanjing Massacre;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislature pass the Nanjing Massacre Commemorative Day Act, 2016 by December 8, 2017, to coincide with the 80th anniversary of the Nanjing Massacre, which will enable Ontarians, especially those with Asian heritage, to plan commemorative activities to honour the victims and families affected by the Nanjing Massacre."

Mr. Speaker, I fully support the petition, and I give it to page Sophie.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and electricity rates have tripled as a result of the

Liberal government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Whereas the billion-dollar gas plants cancellation, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020; and

"Whereas the Liberal government wasted \$2 billion on the flawed smart meter program; and

"Whereas the recent announcement to implement the Ontario Electricity Support Program will see average household hydro bills increase an additional \$137 per year starting in 2016; and

"Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

"Whereas home heating and electricity are a necessity for families in Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario" as follows: "To immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario's power consumers, including families, farmers and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity."

I fully support it and will affix my name and send it with page McGowan again.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over my riding. I'd like to thank Darryl Taylor from Garson. It reads as follows:

"Whereas under the current Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline (PARG), one in eight Ontario schools is at risk of closure; and

"Whereas the value of a school to the local economy and community has been removed from the PARG; and

"Whereas the PARG outlines consultation requirements that are insufficient to allow for meaningful community involvement, including the establishment of community hubs; and

"Whereas school closures have a significant negative impact on families and their children, resulting in inequitable access to extracurricular activities and other essential school involvement, and after-school work opportunities; and

"Whereas school closures have devastating impacts on the growth and overall viability of communities across Ontario, in particular self-sustaining agricultural communities;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly....

"To place an immediate moratorium on all school closures across Ontario and to suspend all pupil accommodation reviews until the PARG has been subject to a substantive review by an all-party committee that will examine the effects of extensive school closures on the health of our communities and children."

I am happy to sign this petition, and will ask my good page Ismael to bring it to the Clerk.

HYDRO RATES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, new Speaker. I'm delighted to have you in the chair.

I have a petition here which I know all members opposite will be very supportive of.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas electricity prices have increased and in too many cases become unaffordable for Ontarians;

"Whereas Ontario is a prosperous province and people should never have to choose between hydro and other daily necessities;

"Whereas people want to know that hydro rate relief is on the way; that relief will go to everyone; and that relief will be lasting because it is built on significant change;

"Whereas the Ontario fair hydro plan would reduce hydro bills for residential consumers, small businesses and farms by an average of 25% as part of a significant system restructuring, with increases held to the rate of inflation for the next four years;

"Whereas the Ontario fair hydro plan would provide people with low incomes and those living in rural communities with even greater reductions to their electricity bills;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the Ontario fair hydro plan and provide relief for Ontario electricity consumers as quickly as possible;

"Continue working to ensure clean, reliable and affordable electricity is available for all Ontarians."

I agree with this petition and will leave it with page Radin.

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PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government needs to strengthen primary care as the foundation of the health care system to achieve health system transformation goals of Patients First; and

"Whereas research shows that interprofessional primary health care delivers better outcomes for people and better value for money; and

"Whereas an investment in primary care will help address recruitment and retention challenges, build strong interprofessional primary care teams and ensure high-quality people-centred primary health care delivery in Ontario; and

"Whereas over 7,500 staff in over 400 community health centres, family health teams, aboriginal health access centres and nurse practitioner-led clinics are being paid below rates recommended in 2012 and as a result

are facing challenges recruiting and retaining health providers, including nurse practitioners, dietitians, registered nurses, health promoters and managers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to invest in interprofessional primary health care teams with a commitment of \$130 million annualized, with an implementation plan over two years, to ensure interprofessional primary health care teams can effectively retain and recruit staff."

I affix my signature to these petitions.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr. John Vanthof: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the amalgamation of Scadding and Rathburn townships into the city of Greater Sudbury has separated and divided an existing community established in 1955 under a service roads board. We were a proud, vibrant, safe community. Reunite us and we can be that again;

"Whereas this forced amalgamation resulted in the main access, Kukagami Lake Road, being maintained in sections by different entities. This results in different standards, which often results in unsafe conditions and concerns for people travelling this road. We are physically isolated from the city of Greater Sudbury by 17 kilometres; we leave the city, travel through Markstay-Warren and a section of roads board before re-entering the city. We are in a wilderness rural area, not an urban setting, which is not conducive to being amalgamated into a city;

"Whereas we are in the provincial riding of Timiskaming-Cochrane not Sudbury or Nickel Belt;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To direct the Minister of Municipal Affairs to consider a request that the townships of Scadding and Rathburn be removed from the city of Greater Sudbury."

I agree with the thousand people who have signed this petition, sign my signature and send it with page Quinn.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LE SOUTIEN À L'ENFANCE, À LA JEUNESSE ET À LA FAMILLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 1, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 89, An Act to enact the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017, to amend and repeal the Child and Family Services Act and to make related amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 89, Loi édictant la Loi de 2017 sur les services à l'enfance, à la jeunesse et à la famille,

modifiant et abrogeant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to rise today as the NDP critic for children and youth services and deliver our lead on this important piece of legislation, Bill 89, the Supporting Children, Youth and Families Act.

I have stood in this place on many occasions to raise concerns about what is happening in Ontario and why we try to provide the best possible start to life for the children and youth of our province. In many of those cases, challenges lay within the Child and Family Services Act, whether they be in child welfare, children's mental health or youth justice. So I'm pleased to see this bill being brought forward so that we might debate it and give it a thorough review with public input at committee.

It isn't often that an act as extensive as the Child and Family Services Act, a bill that has enormous ramifications for our future as a province and, in particular, the future for some of our most vulnerable citizens, gets thrown out and replaced with a complete new act. If our child protection system is going to work, if it is going to do what it has to do for children and families, it must have the confidence of the public.

Several events over the past number of years have caused that confidence to waver, to the extent that even the Premier contemplated blowing up the system. This new legislation is not the result of blowing up the system; far from it. Much of the language used in the new Child, Youth and Family Services Act comes directly from the existing act. But it is a new act, and it is important that we get it right.

I'll say right off the top that I am pleased to see some important foundational principles that are set out in the act. First and foremost, I was pleased to see that within the first few lines it states, "Service provided to children and families should be child-centred." This, of course, was the central part of Katelynn's Principle, which was recommended by the jury in the coroner's inquest into the tragic death of young Katelynn Sampson, and also formed the content and provided the name of my recent private member's bill, Bill 57.

When Bill 89 was introduced back in December, the government made mention of it being consistent with Katelynn's Principle, but I note there is no reference to Katelynn's Principle in the act, and I will talk more about that point later in my speech. Nonetheless, I am pleased to see it recognized that children should be at the centre of decisions being made affecting them, and that they should have input into those decisions.

I am pleased to see that language has been modernized to reflect the times we live in and to respect the children, families and communities served by the system, language that strives to ensure that the many facets and characteristics of Ontario's diverse children and youth are given full consideration in the provision of services.

I am pleased to see more stringent accountability measures being put into place. I am pleased that pro-

tection will now be extended to 16- and 17-year-olds. I am pleased that rules are proposed regarding the collection and use of data, and also that individuals can access their personal information held on them at no cost. So there are definitely good steps forward with this bill.

Ontario New Democrats support any initiative that aims to keep children and youth safe and provide them and their families with the services and support that they need to reach their full potential. But I want to be clear: We certainly have some concerns with the bill as it is presented.

First, and I have heard this from a broad range of stakeholders in the sector, many of the provisions laid out in the bill are severely lacking in detail, details that are important for us to understand exactly how these provisions will be implemented, details that will inform us on how the act will impact the operation of service providers and, more importantly, the lives of children and youth.

All of these will be prescribed in regulations. Regulations that are not even written yet will determine how successful this legislation will be. Two hundred and six times, Speaker: That's how often the words "prescribed" or "prescribe" appear in the body of the bill. This not only makes it difficult to properly evaluate the bill, but it also causes concern that important decisions will be made without any debate or input at the legislative level and with no guarantee of public consideration of changes.

I would also suggest, Speaker, that the bill is overly fond of the word "may." There are too many instances where actions are left to the discretion of the minister or other key individuals in the system rather than nailing them down in the legal requirements in legislation.

I also think that opportunities have been missed to introduce some fundamental changes that would improve the lives and experiences of children, youth and families caught up in the system.

Before I move on, there is one other very important point that I want to make, and again, I've heard this same point from many service providers. Adding requirements of service providers is all good and well, but if the funding to carry out those responsibilities is not made available, then we will all be in serious trouble. This sector is already seriously underfunded. Agencies and their workers are already pushed to their limits.

We recently saw a strike at Peel CAS that had at its central issue caps of the workload in the workforce. Those workers were on strike, not for a pay raise but because of their concern that they were overloaded with cases and vulnerable children were not getting the attention they needed and deserve.

Nipissing and Parry Sound CAS workers are currently locked out over issues of quality service that they want to provide but they can't due to the lack of funding. Children's aid societies used to be able to appeal for a top-up at the end of the year if they didn't manage to stay within their budget. That is no longer the case. The funding formula has changed in recent years, with some societies getting less money and some getting more. But

collectively, they are all operating with less money than they did previously.

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As CPIN is getting introduced, agencies are finding that they have to spend much more than they have been allocated to get it up and running. Workers report that many more hours are being spent trying to facilitate relatively straightforward operations on this new data program.

Children's Mental Health Ontario reports that there are 12,000 children and youth waiting to access mental health services. The sector has been screaming out for funding for years, but over the past 25 years there have only been two base funding increases: 3% in 2003 and 5% in 2006. Costs, meanwhile, have gone up drastically due to inflation, but also due to increased demand.

We've made great strides forward in raising awareness in mental health. It is no longer the stigma that it was in years past, and that is a terrific move in the right direction. But if we can't provide the services for that increased demand, we let everyone down. That is a concern I have with this bill. It's fine to set the stage for better services, but if the money isn't there to deliver those services, then it's all just a shell game. In the long term, it costs us more. When we starve child welfare, children's mental health and youth corrections, we pay the cost, with interest, down the road.

Let me take a minute to offer a quick overview of the four schedules that make up this bill.

Schedule 1 introduces the new Child, Youth and Family Services Act, the CYFSA, to replace the existing Child and Family Services Act, the CFSA. The paramount purpose of the act remains the same, that being to promote the best interests, protection and well-being of children.

Schedule 2 amends the existing CFSA to include services for 16- and 17-year-olds on an interim basis, until such time as the new CYFSA is proclaimed.

Schedule 3 will be enacted at the appropriate time, and it amends the CYFSA to decommission the Child Abuse Register when the Child Protection Information Network, also called CPIN, is fully operational.

Schedule 4 amends 36 other acts to ensure they accurately reference the new CYFSA and its provisions.

My remarks today will be focused on schedule 1 of the bill.

I mentioned previously that I was pleased that reference to services being child-centred was made in the first three lines of the act. This comes within the preamble to the act and is the first stated principle of the government. Other principles in the same preamble are as follows:

- support the reduction of more disruptive services and interventions through early intervention and prevention, and supports that build on family strengths;

- respect diversity and the principle of inclusion, consistent with the Human Rights Code and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms;

- a call for systemic barriers and racism to be addressed and inform the delivery of all services for children and families; and

—expect child and family connections to their communities to be maintained wherever possible.

The preamble also offers the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to be the touchstone for the Child, Youth and Family Services Act and as a foundation on which to build.

The preamble goes on to give specific mention of First Nations, Inuit and Métis people as constitutionally recognized peoples with their own laws and distinct culture and political and historical ties to the province. It states that there should be a timely provision of services in accordance with Jordan's Principle and recognizes the importance of First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples belonging to a community or a nation, as written in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

These are all very commendable statements of principle that are collected together right at the front of the act, the first thing that you see when you open it up. I wouldn't disagree with any of them and I am pleased to see them there.

The question, though, is whether those principles are adequately reflected through the actual legislation and whether teeth are given to those stated principles to ensure that they are enforced. Sadly, I fear that this bill lacks the force of legislation required to back up those principles.

As I go through the bill, it's difficult to understand how the principles will be enforced, given that they will be subjected to interpretation and unspecified application.

How, also, can we measure them to determine how good or bad we might be doing in relation to them? There are useful additions in the additional purposes of the act that provide a broader spectrum of characteristics that should be taken into account when services are provided.

As we come to better understand the full diversity that exists throughout our communities, it is important that our laws reflect and support those realities. Race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, family diversity, disability, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression can all be vitally important in how a person understands themselves. If we are to give children and youth the best start in life, we must give full consideration to their self-identity and allow them to flourish and develop confidence in who they are.

An additional purpose that is carried over from the CFSA states: "While parents may need help in caring for their children, that help should give support to the autonomy and integrity of the family unit...."

I think an opportunity has been missed in this bill to try to address a problem that I'm sure all members will be familiar with throughout their constituency work.

The fact is that some families find our child welfare system impossibly difficult to navigate. They feel frustrated that people don't listen to them. They feel outgunned by lawyers in court who know the system inside and out, while they can't afford much, if any, legal representation.

The Toronto Star recently reported on the Ontario Supreme Court ruling related to an ongoing investigation of cases connected to hair analysis done by the Motherisk laboratory at SickKids. I'm going to quote from their story from a couple of weeks ago:

"This is the heart-rending dilemma depicted in a scathing Ontario Superior Court ruling that delivers a broad indictment of a 'broken' child welfare system. Justice Grant A. Campbell reveals how reliance on discredited hair testing from the Hospital for Sick Children's Motherisk laboratory contributed to a 'perfect storm' of 'errors, incompetence ... and mistakes.' Throughout, the parents were 'ignored, demeaned and disbelieved,' while their child was shuffled between placements.

"So significant was the damage that Campbell included an unqualified apology to the parents in his ruling, which he delivered orally in a Kitchener court last week.

"'It should not have happened. You should have been treated better,' he said to the mother and father, identified by their initials, C.T. and J.B. 'It did and you weren't, and for that, on behalf of the very system that perpetrated this upon you, I apologize to you both.'"

At the end of the day, it's the child who suffers.

I also remember a case from about two years ago when a child care provider suspected abuse of a child in her care and reported it, and the children's aid society investigated the complaint and found it to be unfounded. Following on from this, the parents who had been the subject of the investigation chose to take the child care provider to court, suing her for the stress her report caused on them. The judge in the case ordered the child care provider to pay \$10,000 in damages and also to pay the legal bill of over \$3,000 for the parents.

That whole scenario tells me that something is wrong with the way that sometimes things get done. There is a duty to report suspected abuse—not just known abuse, but suspected abuse, as well. That duty applies to everyone, but for people who work with children, it's actually illegal for them not to report suspected abuse. A person working with children, including operators and employees of child care programs or centres, who fails to report abuse is liable of a conviction of up to \$1,000—an amount, by the way, that will increase to \$5,000 under the provisions of this new act.

The duty to report is an important part of our child abuse and neglect strategy, but when the consequences of that reporting include families being so traumatized by the investigation that they are able to get a judge to order the person who reported to pay over \$13,000, something isn't right. On one hand, you tell people that they have a duty to report if they suspect abuse, and on the other, you say, "But, by the way, if you were wrong, you could end up in court." That isn't good for the protection of our children and youth.

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We don't need anything that puts a chill on people who suspect abuse. We need everyone to have confidence in the system and not fear the possible conse-

quences of reporting. Perhaps, Speaker, if we had language in this act to help families who come in contact with the system navigate their way through it, we could ease this concern. But I don't see anything in the CYFSA that helps us find a way to support families in situations like this so that they, their extended family and friends can have confidence in a system that has a very difficult job to do.

Part II of the act is devoted specifically to children's and young persons' rights. This is the part where we see the elements of Katelynn's Principle being established in the act:

- their right to express their own views on matters affecting them;

- their right to be part of a dialogue to ensure they understand fully the reason decisions are being made about them;

- the right to be consulted and advised;

- the right to raise concerns;

- the right to be informed in language suitable to their understanding of these rights; and

- their right to be informed about the role of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, and how to contact that office.

As I said, Speaker, this was taken from Katelynn's Principle. Katelynn Sampson, as we all remember, was a seven-year-old girl who died after being brutally abused by her guardians. As the coroner's inquest heard, her death was preceded by a number of failures in our system, not the least of which was the fact that nobody spoke to Katelynn.

She was placed in the care of people who had a history of involvement with child welfare agencies. The case was passed from one agency to another with no follow-up. Her guardians themselves said that they couldn't care for her. They called the agency asking to have Katelynn removed from their home. When the call was finally returned 16 days later, her guardian said that the school was taking care of it—a lie that was just accepted with no follow-up. The school reported concerns of abuse when Katelynn came to school with bruises all over her face and pink spots on her arms and hands. Nobody from children's aid followed up, and neither did the school. Throughout all of this, nobody ever spoke to Katelynn.

The inquest jury made 173 recommendations to prevent such a tragic series of events from happening again. The first among those recommendations was Katelynn's Principle, so I am pleased to see it reflected in this bill. Children must be at the centre of any decision affecting them. They must be seen and listened to with respect. Their views must always be taken into account.

But there are some ways, I believe, that the act does not fully reflect the intent of Katelynn's Principle. Katelynn's Principle was more demanding. It required that the rights stated in the act must be adhered to, not just that children and youth had those rights.

There are also a couple of parts of Katelynn's Principle that are missing from the act. First, Katelynn's Principle was recommended by the jury. It's clearly

intended to cover the education system as well as the child welfare and youth justice systems.

Also, I point to the final paragraph of the first jury recommendation, and it states: "Everyone who provides services to children or services that affect children are child advocates. Advocacy may potentially be a child's lifeline. It must occur from the point of first contact and on a continual/continuous basis thereafter." That paragraph isn't included in the act, but as we try to do everything possible to make sure that no child falls through the cracks in the way that had such a tragic consequence for Katelynn Sampson, I think it's an important piece of the principle.

That is why, Speaker, I would like to see my private member's bill, Bill 57, Katelynn's Principle Act, be a companion piece of legislation to this bill. It has already passed second reading, so it should be relatively straightforward to make it happen.

In terms of detail with the act, section 9 refers to the rights of communication. Written communication to and from a young person who is detained in a place of detention or custody cannot be opened, inspected or read if it is from their lawyer, the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, the Ombudsman, an MPP or an MP. However, the same restrictions do not apply for children in care. In their case, only communication to or from the young person's lawyer may not be examined or read. I don't understand why communication between a child in care and the provincial advocate, in particular, is not protected in the same way as it is for young people in custody.

I also want to make a point here, Speaker, about clarity. I appreciate that some efforts have been made to make the language of the act more user-friendly, but I think perhaps people ran out of time on that particular part of the project. This section 9 that I referred to comes directly from the CFSA—basically, word for word—with a couple of small exceptions. Crown wards, by the way, are now called children in extended society care, and society wards are now called children in interim society care—small but good changes.

Anyway, it is cumbersome language in the CFSA, and it remains cumbersome language today in the CYFSA. Let me give you an example of how it reads:

"Written communications to and from a young person who is detained in a place of temporary detention or held in a place of secure custody or of open custody ...

"(c) shall not be examined or read under clause (b) if it is to or from the young person's lawyer; and

"(d) shall not be opened and inspected under clause (a) or examined or read under clause (b) if it is to or from a person described in subclause (1) (b) (ii), (iii) or (iv)."

There's a lot more, but I just wanted to give you a flavour of it. This type of language is common throughout the act. In this case, it's not too bad because the clauses and subclauses referred to are actually quite close together in the act. In other cases, you have to go searching through the act to find the related clauses and flip back and forth trying to make sense of it all. I know for the lawyers in this room, you are used to that. And for

lawyers who work daily with the CFSA, it probably isn't too challenging. Maybe it is; I don't know. What I do know is that for people who cannot afford a lawyer, for people who have never looked at it before, it is hugely challenging to get your head around it.

So, yes, I think that a lot more could be done to make the act more readable. Huge chunks of the CFSA have been simply dropped into the CYFSA with no thought as to how it might better serve children, youth and families. If there was a desire to respond to the Premier's suggestion of blowing the whole thing up, it would appear that this has been a controlled explosion.

Also, in this part relating to children's and young persons' rights, we have a section for complaints and reviews, but details are lacking. "A service provider who provides residential care ... shall establish a written procedure, in accordance with the regulations, for hearing and dealing with complaints ..."

As in so many other cases, I guess we'll have to wait and see what the regulations say. Maybe those regulations will provide for the written procedure to be published and made easily available to those who might need it. They should. Better yet, why not put those requirements right into this legislation?

When the complaint is received, the service provider will do a review. Yes, that's a good piece, but there is no time period for when the review should be done. I think we all know the frustrations that people feel when the wheels move slowly. It is particularly difficult for people living in challenging circumstances who wait and wait for action.

If the person who makes the complaint isn't satisfied with the result of the review, they can request a further review of the complaint by a person not employed by the service provider. That's also good. Also good is that the further review will be done within 30 days. So if we can set a time limit for the further review, why can't one be set for the initial review?

1400

Speaker, a significant change in this bill is that child protection will now be available to 16- and 17-year-olds. Currently, 16- and 17-year-olds can only access services if they have already been receiving services before they were 16. I've spoken in favour of increasing the age in the past, and I am in favour of it in this bill. It isn't acceptable that we are simply turning our backs on 16- and 17-year-olds who need help and protection. As things stand, if a 16- or 17-year-old finds that they can no longer live at home, their only escape is to live on the street, and that is exactly what many of them do—escape to sleep in shop doorways, escape to destitution without money to buy coffee or a sandwich, and escape to the constant fear of who or what is around the next corner. That is no escape at all, but sadly, as it is, they find it better than the home they have left behind. So, yes, I fully support the extension of protection to 16- and 17-year-olds.

In looking at the language of the act, though, I'm a bit confused as to how it will be interpreted. Others I have spoken to feel the same. Section 76 says:

"(1) The society and a child who is 16 or 17 may make a written agreement for services and supports to be provided for the child where,

"(a) the society has jurisdiction where the child resides;

"(b) the society has determined that the child is or may be in need of protection;

"(c) the society is satisfied that no course of action less disruptive to the child, such as care in the child's own home or with a relative, neighbour or other member of the child's community or extended family, is able to adequately protect the child; and

"(d) the child wants to enter into the agreement." So only if the child wants to enter into the agreement.

But subsection 21(1) says, "A service provider may provide a service to a person who is 16 or older only with the person's consent, except where the court orders under this act that the service be provided to the person."

Then there's another subsection saying that this subsection "does not apply where a service is provided to a child under part V (Child Protection)." So which is it—only when the child wants it, or can the court order it?

You will also note that in quoting section 76, I said that a written agreement may be made. I've been asked if that means that a society isn't required to enter into an agreement even if all the conditions are met. I don't know the answer to that, but it sounds like a very legitimate question.

When it comes to 16- and 17-year-olds, there is no duty to report abuse or suspected abuse. I understand that there are different, competing rights and obligations that need to be considered for this age group. I get that, but I'm concerned that there is no duty to report. In many ways, they are at a very vulnerable age—susceptible, for example, to human trafficking. I think we need to give serious thought about how we're going to best combat that.

I've also heard concerns raised about what is intended with the new provision for the minister to be able to designate lead agencies. I'm sure that the minister has also been asked about this—and I have spoken with him about this, with no clarification. Lead agencies already exist in children's mental health. They were put in place a couple of years ago. In 33 areas of the province, one agency has been identified as the lead agency for these areas. They are responsible for ensuring that core services are available in the community and for leading collaboration with other service providers in the area to work out the best way of delivering those services.

I had a good meeting a couple of weeks ago with the executive director of Lynwood Charlton Centre, the lead agency in the Hamilton area. He's pleased with what they have been able to do, even though they are having to do more with less. As I said earlier, children's mental health is really struggling as demand for service grows while funding has basically flatlined. Agencies in Hamilton work collaboratively to make the best that they can of a very unfortunate situation. I'm pleased to say that the agencies in Hamilton have a history of working together

to find arrangements that work best for children and youth living with mental health challenges. But Bill 89 doesn't limit the lead agency model to the delivery of children's mental health services. Many people are wondering what the government has in mind with this particular provision. Will the lead agency model be employed in the delivery of other services under the CYFSA? That is something that people would be very interested to know.

Now I want to talk about accountability. As people will know, this is something that I've had a bit to say about in the past in this chamber. Twice I introduced a private member's bill that would give oversight responsibility of children's aid societies to the Ombudsman. Both times it passed second reading, but never made it to committee. Since then, the Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act was passed, which gave oversight authority to the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. This was welcome. However, I don't think the powers given to the advocate match the powers that the Ombudsman would have had.

I think there are still gaps in oversight that could be filled, but there is a major problem that has always been a complex mix of who can investigate what, what complaints are rightfully placed and who has the authority to correct a wrong. And that problem is still there. This is an ongoing problem with people unsure of the avenue to follow if they want to complain. The office of the advocate has tried to clarify these procedures on their website, but it's not an easy job. So yes, I think we need to have a robust accountability framework—which this bill sets out to do—but I don't think the government has got it right.

Bill 89 allows for the minister to remove and appoint board members. The minister can designate a chair of the board or even appoint a supervisor to operate and manage the affairs and activities of the society. And when a supervisor is appointed, the society's board ceases to exist. The supervisor has full control of this society. These are sweeping changes that give extraordinary power and authority to one person: the minister.

Yes, we need to have accountability, especially with agencies that are government-funded—to the tune of, what is it, \$1.5 billion?—and are given the responsibility to protect some of Ontario's most vulnerable children and youth. Most definitely we need accountability, but is this the best way that the government could come up with to achieve that, by giving so much power to one person?

I wish I had faith in that power, that it would always be exerted in the best interest of children and youth, but I'm sorry, Speaker: History has shown us that this government does not always act in the best interests of anyone but themselves. And if you want to take issue with that, I ask you to think of the future and all the possible Ministers of Children and Youth Services in years to come. Do you really want to give such sweeping powers to one person? There need to be some checks and balances built into this to ensure that power and authority isn't abused with self-serving politics, that it doesn't get in the way of making the best decision for our children and youth.

An important part of this act is its recognition of the unique challenges faced by First Nations, Inuit and Métis people. It strives to work within a framework that recognizes—let's go back to the quote from the preamble: "First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples are constitutionally recognized peoples in Canada, with their own laws, and distinct cultural, political and historical ties to the province of Ontario."

You can say that and then, given the colonial history of our province, the effects of which we have heard so much about through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the damage done because we supposedly knew what was best for indigenous peoples—in the face of all of that, you think it's okay to say, "Oh, by the way, if I don't like what you're doing, I'm going to pick someone to take over your agency"—really? Not even a mention about how such a person would be picked.

The minister will also have the power to amalgamate societies, a significant power. That would have quite an impact on some communities, but it can be done with the stroke of a pen.

1410

When that happens, when the minister dictates from on high that two or more societies will be amalgamated—that's right, there's no limit as to how many can be amalgamated into one—the minister has to give written notice to each affected society. The societies then have the right to respond. That's also true when the minister exerts those other powers, such as appointing a supervisor. But there's only a requirement that the society be given notice and a right to respond. Nowhere is there a requirement that either the minister or the society be required to inform the general public or the workers or their union on the decision to amalgamate and give them the right to respond as well. It seems to me that the public and the workers who will be most affected in this type of situation deserve to know what's happening, why it's happening, and to have the right to provide input.

While we're on the subject of society boards, let me talk a little bit about the makeup of boards. Section 35 says: "A society that provides services to First Nations, Inuit or Métis children and families shall have the prescribed number of First Nations, Inuit or Métis representatives on its board of directors, appointed in the prescribed manner and for the prescribed terms." The drafters certainly like that word, "prescribed," as you will have heard, Speaker, but we'll leave that alone again for now. That's a good section to see. It might be better if I had a sense of just how much influence those board members might have in the term of numbers, but it's good to see there. I wonder why we're stopping there, though, Speaker. Wherever we have boards making decisions for communities, those boards should include people chosen directly from those that they serve. There should be certainly a representation from any group that is overrepresented in a system.

The One Vision One Voice project brought together people who knew the child welfare sector and also knew the African Canadian community. They consulted with

people from that community with a view to, as the subtitle of the project says, “changing the Ontario child welfare system to better serve African Canadians.” Speaker, in the report you will read that while only 8.5% of Toronto’s population is African Canadian, over 40% of children in care are from that community. These figures, by the way, come from the Toronto Children’s Aid Society. But in general, we know nothing about who is in the child welfare system because we don’t collect data. We can come back to data collection a little bit later too. You will also read that African Canadians report that they get treated differently than their white counterparts when they are entered into the child welfare system. They don’t have access to culturally appropriate services, and they have poorer outcomes. The report talks about “the racism within the system and the larger society that created the racial disproportionality.”

This project was funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth and carried out through the Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies. It is an important piece of work that offers a number of recommendations, but I do not see any of that work reflected here in this act.

One small step would be to legislate that boards be representative of the people that they serve. What about including youth in care or former youth in care? We do it with school boards: We have student trustees. Why don’t we do it in child welfare? Katelynn’s Principle: Youth, working with the provincial advocate’s office, presented it to the coroner’s inquest and it became the guiding principle of this act. If they can do that, just think what they could bring to board tables all across Ontario.

Include families who have used the services of children’s aid societies on their boards, and, for all of those people, provide them support that will fully allow them to participate in the functioning of boards. Often, people who volunteer their time to sit on community boards are people who feel comfortable in that type of setting. They’re used to sitting around a table, hearing reports and providing input. That’s not always the case with youth and families who have received child welfare services. Many of them will have never been in that type of setting. We need to make boards more accessible to them because there is no substitute for lived experience. Require boards to include those people served by the system and provide support so they can participate to their full potential. So much could be achieved if we gave those people a voice and respected what they had to say.

As I work my way through the bill, I want to briefly touch on an example of a key problem identified earlier: the problem that Katelynn’s Principle doesn’t come through in the actual language of the act.

This is in relation to residential placement advisory committees. First of all, the minister may establish residential placement advisory committees—not “will” or “shall”; the minister might, if he feels inclined. The section goes on to outline the duties of the RPAC, which include this: “An advisory committee shall conduct a review under this section in an informal manner and in the absence of the public, and ... may,

“(a) interview the child, members of the child’s family and any representatives of the child and family....”

A child has the right to express their views freely, a right to be engaged, a right to be consulted, a right to raise concerns, and a right to be informed. But when it comes to the actual language of the act, the legal part, the advisory committee can decide whether or not they speak to a child. In other words, it doesn’t matter what their rights are; there is no legal obligation to do it.

Moving on, Speaker, let me talk a little bit about solitary confinement, or, as it is in the existing CFSA, secure isolation. In 2015, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth did a systemic review of secure isolation in Ontario. In commenting on his resulting report, which is called *It’s a Matter of Time*, he said this: “Youth justice custody is supposed to give young people the opportunities for rehabilitation so they can turn their lives around and later reintegrate into society. Solitary confinement runs counter to this model since it negatively harms an individual’s mental and physical health, especially those with mental health issues.”

In particular, he called for a complete ban on putting youth in solitary confinement for more than 24 hours, which would bring Ontario in line with international standards.

In response to the report, the Premier said, “The advocate has done his job and has shone a light on some issues that of course we’re concerned about and that we will need to work with him to rectify, absolutely.” Clearly something would be done in the new act when it was written. And it was. Secure isolation would now be called secure de-escalation. That’s it. No other changes to the language in the act regarding the use of de-escalation—changed the name. There’s a recognized problem, and the only thing that they can come up with to fix it is to change the name.

Speaker, I’m not saying that words aren’t important, because they are. I support the various points where the language has been modernized in Bill 89, but there is much more that needs to be done than that.

In the CYFSA, as in the CFSA, there are provisions that say that a child or young person who is put in secure de-escalation must be continuously observed. It is also not legal to hold them there for more than eight hours in a 24-hour period and not more than 24 hours in a week.

Those provisions don’t apply to a person who is 16 or older. Instead, there will be other standards and procedures to be followed that will be prescribed. There we go—more lack of detail. We don’t know what those standards and procedures will be because they are not yet written, or if they are, nobody gets to see them.

Mechanical restraints are not referred to in the existing CFSA, but they do get a mention in the CYFSA. Their use is banned under the CYFSA, with the exception that they can be used in a secure facility in youth corrections or under “Extraordinary Measures,” part VII of the act.

The problem here is that the conditions that say when they can and will be used will be set in regulations, and policies will be based on those regulations.

While we are talking about youth in corrections, it would be remiss of me not to mention OPSEU's "Apples to Apples" campaign. At the core of this campaign, if you'll excuse the pun, is the disparity between the two systems within youth corrections. One is the Ontario public service and one is the broader public service. These two systems are both funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, and they serve the same youth. The Youth Justice Services Manual has two sets of regulations: one for OPS and one for BPS. There are consistent standards within the OPS, but in the BPS, I understand the different standards can be applied at the discretion of the agencies. Pay is lower in the BPS, and while all workers in the OPS facilities are covered by WSIB, there is no mandated WSIB coverage for those in the BPS. This makes no sense, Speaker.

1420

Standards of service and conditions of employment should be consistent across the entire youth corrections sector. Because Young People Matter, the report of the Residential Services Review Panel, agreed. In their report, they stated: "The ministry continues to operate the two legacy systems in secure custody and detention as two ... distinct service delivery systems, with inconsistent standards for the hiring, training and compensation of staff, or practice between the two systems.... An integration of the two systems into one harmonized system could bring the full resources of both systems together to enhance opportunities to meet the needs of young people in secure detention and custody."

So I would say that the rewriting of this act was an opportunity missed to make some significant changes, and this would have been one of them.

I think there were also opportunities missed with respect to the residential licensing.

Flowing from the report of the Residential Services Review Panel—I think the ministry heard some serious concerns raised in that report. They certainly mentioned some of them in the briefing that I received; for example,

- limited quality standards;
- licensing and compliance information not being shared publicly;
- limited authority to conduct unannounced inspections.

There is a new section in the CYFSA addressing residential licensing inspections, but I think it lacks what the authors of the report were looking for. The greatest concern is that the inspection process doesn't focus on the most important aspect: the quality of services being delivered. The panel called for inspection processes that specifically evaluate the quality of care offered to children and youth. I've heard that inspection reports can include items such as the colour of a bathtub or a bruised apple being in a bowl on the table, but at the same time lack reference to the quality of services being provided.

Going back to the central theme of my thoughts on this bill, an inspector "may" question a child on matters relevant to an inspection. There's no requirement to speak to the child and young person. They might do it if

they feel like it, I guess. The child does have the right to refuse to be questioned by the inspector, as they should, but why doesn't the act require the inspector to at least make the approach? Why not take it a little bit further? Why would there be no requirement that children and young people in a residence are informed that an inspector is on the premises and available for them to speak to in confidence? The reason for that might be because of concerns the inspector isn't qualified to have that conversation. I suppose under this act it would be understandable, because there is nothing in the act that speaks to the qualifications of an inspector, which is another problem. In this bill, there are no requirements of inspectors that identify their expertise in social services or in conducting inspections.

The Ontario Association of Residences Treating Youth, OARTY, points to the fact that residential licensing was and remains facility- or building-focused rather than being focused on the child. They see in the CYFSA a missed opportunity to reimagine the residential services sector and write legislation that allowed for innovation and forward-thinking improvements. As they say—and I believe this is in keeping with Katelynn's Principle—the structure, both licensing and funding, needs to follow the child, not the bed.

Concerns about qualifications go beyond inspectors, as well. Let's remember that those who work in children's residences are often required to provide treatment to young people with complex mental health concerns. They can have deep depression, they can be suicidal, and the abuse and neglect that they have suffered can cause horrendous trauma. Yet there are no requirements that staff be trained to work in that setting. I find it incredible that this government has allowed this to continue. Staff should be qualified to do the job we need them to do if our residential system is to succeed.

Now a bit about personal information: Standards need to be set, and there needs to be a program in place that allows existing staff to meet those standards within a period of time and that they are not expected to pay for. Concerns have been raised over the years about the lack of data, sharing of information and access to files in our child welfare system. Without data we have no idea who is in our system. We don't know for sure what groups of children and youth are overrepresented, we can't measure the success of programs, and we can't plan or direct services where they are most needed. We saw in the Katelynn Sampson case what can happen when information isn't shared. The jury gave four recommendations on information sharing alone. It has been a long-standing concern that individuals do not have a right to access their own personal information that is in the hands of the ministry service providers, so I am pleased to see part X of the CYFSA devoted to this.

First, I would like to say how important it is that people will now be entitled to access their personal files. But with regard to the collection of data, right off the bat the minister is given an out. The first line under the minister's power to collect, use and disclose personal

information says—wait for it—“The minister may collect personal information.”

Where is the responsibility to do it? Why is there power but no responsibility? As I've said, there is a common theme throughout this act. It is important that we make data and information work to the benefit of children and youth, but we must also remember that this information is highly sensitive and people have a right to their privacy. I recognize that this is a challenging line to walk, but the government must meet this challenge.

I would say that there are at least a couple of sections that cause me some concern in this regard.

Section 300 says, “A service provider shall take reasonable steps to ensure that personal information is not collected without authority.”

Section 302 says, “(1) A service provider,

“(a) shall take reasonable steps to ensure that the records of personal information that has been collected for the purpose of providing a service and that are in its custody or control are retained, transferred and disposed of in a secure manner.”

Why “reasonable steps”? Why not just say, “Don't do it”? To take reasonable steps to not do something you aren't authorized to do is like saying that we should all take reasonable steps to drive within the speed limit.

When we talk about data collection and information sharing, it's impossible to not talk about CPIN, the Child Protection Information Network. CPIN is slowly rolling out to children's aid societies across Ontario, a process that won't be completed until 2020. The minister tells me that all is going well, but that's not what I hear from front-line workers who have to work with it. The concerns sound very similar to the related program, SAMS, that is used in our social assistance system. Members will know about the problems with SAMS; it has made front-page news on a number of occasions.

Those working with CPIN say that it is taking much longer to get problems fixed. Endless hours are spent trying to find data that is supposed to be in there. On occasion, children who are in the system cannot be found on CPIN. These problems can have very serious consequences for vulnerable children and youth. CPIN is causing high stress in the workplace for those working with it and is putting added stress on the budgets of agencies that are already stretched, I'd have to say, way past their limit. Each agency is given \$220,000 to pay for the transition to CPIN, but that is only a fraction of what it's costing agencies, especially ones with larger case-loads. There are high hopes for what CPIN will eventually be able to do, but we are a long way from that, and there is a lot of work to do.

1430

Speaker, I am running out of time here, so just let me say that it's important that this bill gets to committee and that enough time is provided to hear from experts in the field: those who use the system, those who work in it and those who have studied it. I know they have a lot to say and have many suggestions for how the CYFSA can be improved to better serve Ontario's children, youth and their families.

In years to come, there will undoubtedly be a need to continue to update the act to ensure it meets our needs. Currently, there is a mandated review of the act every five years, a mandate that continues in the CYFSA.

The concerns I have laid out in the last hour I think reflect the size of the task at hand. A complete rewrite of the CFSA was always going to be a daunting task, taking into consideration not only the mandated review but the other reports that have been prepared over the past number of years. Looking to the future, perhaps it's time to consider an ongoing review. In BC, for example, which also has a five-year review, there is an all-party Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth that meets on a regular basis.

Protecting vulnerable children and youth from harm, providing the services they need to allow them to meet their full potential, is perhaps the most important thing a government can do. It isn't just the right thing to do. Investment in their future is an investment for us all.

As I've said throughout, the lack of detail is concerning. The reliance on yet unknown regulations makes it very difficult to offer an adequate evaluation. In many areas, the language could have been a lot more robust in a way that requires action to be taken rather than suggesting that it could be taken. I've offered a few examples of each of these concerns, but there are many, many more.

Finally, if this CYFSA is going to do what the minister says he wants it to do, the funding will need to be in place to put it back to where it needs to be. There is already inadequate funding and it is impossible to do more with less.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Granville Anderson: I would like to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain for her remarks. I know she has been very passionate about this subject. Some of the points she made are valid points, and I'm sure we will act upon them and we'll work together to make this a better bill for all of the kids in the province of Ontario. I know that's what we all want in this House.

There is much to say about the content of the Child, Youth and Family Services Act on how it will affect all Ontarians positively. I've heard from my constituents in Durham and on my travels throughout this great province on several of these issues, and I'm pleased to say that this proposed legislation would bring positive changes to individuals in my riding, as well as all across this province. Our government is committed to ensuring every child is given the best start in life. This act will further ensure that by strengthening services and better protecting and caring for our most vulnerable young people.

This bill clarifies the obligation of the providers in relation to the rights of the child. This means that its intent is less open to interpretation, and this will ensure the voice of every child is incorporated in the decision-making process around child care.

I know the member from Hamilton Mountain spoke about the diversity issue and the need to include and

continue to address systemic racism. I was happy to be part of the discussions during the round table early last year in Durham region and throughout the province where this issue came up, and the disproportionate number of children in care from the black and Caribbean community across this province. We need more visible child care workers, but there must be some systemic root for the problem that needs to be addressed as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 89—

Interjections.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you. Anyway, it's a pleasure to rise and speak to the bill. It affects over 37 acts. I've been looking through the caucus brief and listening very carefully to the member from Hamilton Mountain, who in her opening lead gave a very great outline of what's of concern in the bill and what they'd like to see included as well. I know our party has some issues with it too. They'd like to see, when it goes to committee, a number of amendments.

I'd like to pay credit, of course, to two members of our party, one former and one still here. Bill 88 was introduced originally by Rod Jackson, the member from Barrie. Of course, that might have led to the genesis of this today. Then, Jim McDonnell had a private member's bill as well that covered a lot of this.

I know there have been a number of reports by Auditor Generals, back in 2003, 2008 and 2016, pointing out a number of shortcomings in the legislation and what child care workers had to work with to try and do that job. Hopefully, this goes somewhere to addressing that.

Of course, we all know the sad events—well, I read about a number of them on the weekend again. It's very troubling when you read about these young children in people's care, whether it's in Ontario or some other province; I read about a number of different places. Of course, the two here in Ontario, Katelynn Sampson and Jeffrey Baldwin, were two children who obviously slipped through the cracks. People weren't doing their job, whether it was in the school system or in social services, or even neighbours in the same building who knew; people had to have seen something going wrong.

It's like a lot of other bills. People need to be speaking up. If you think something is wrong, say so. Don't let these tragedies evolve. I get so upset. I think people need to stick their nose in other people's business when there are things like this going on with these children falling through the cracks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I listened intently to what the honourable member from Hamilton Mountain had to say. She took a 300-page bill and made it relevant to what is going on on the ground right now in our province.

What does it mean for the families who have dealings with children's aid? What does it mean for the children who need our care, who need our protection? She was able to take what is a very complex piece of legislation—

300 pages of legalese is not something easy to read, but she did it. She was able to put it into words that make sense.

Now comes the time for all three parties to show whether we are going to put the needs of the child at the forefront and take a piece of legislation that has some really good steps in it and also fix the part that got left behind or the parts where we did not quite get it to the point where we maximize the opportunity to protect children and to help families. She gave a number of examples of this through the bill. I hope that both sides were listening and that when we start to bring changes forward, they are welcomed in the spirit of the work that she has done.

All the work she did on her private member's bill for Katelynn's Principle shows where she wants to go. She wants to make sure that what happened to Katelynn never happens to any child in Ontario ever again. We've learned from it. There were over 150 recommendations to make sure that it does not happen again. Some of them we can find in the bill, but some of them were left behind. This is a mistake. We have to listen to what the member from Hamilton Mountain has to say to make this bill as good as it could be.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: It's a pleasure to stand and speak to this bill. I would like to thank the speakers from Hamilton Mountain, Durham, Sarnia-Lambton and Nickel Belt—and particularly the member from Hamilton Mountain for her leadoff speech. You've covered a lot of ground. I'm just going to try very quickly, in the short time that I have, to touch on a few of the things that you have mentioned.

With respect to amalgamations, I do need to stress that since 2011, 16 societies have voluntarily amalgamated, and that they all are going very well. They seem to be very, very pleased about that. The whole intention behind amalgamations is to support more consistent service delivery and access to a high-quality level of care. As has been already said, no decisions have been made on any further amalgamations.

1440

With respect to access to information, the entire reason why we have sculpted this out of the bill is because we need to make sure that families are not having to repeat their story time and time again. This is something that I've heard from constituents in my riding, and I know categorically that it is going to be something that is going to streamline that level of care, because if families don't need to relive their experiences, that's going to help a great deal.

With respect to CPIN funding, the ministry is providing direct funding of \$220,000 to each society that is implementing CPIN, and additional funds have been given to provide support for the migration of the data and for training as well, and that is outside of the \$220,000.

I just want to acknowledge you again for the work that you've done on the file. It is a very hefty piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Hamilton Mountain can now reply.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the members from Durham, Sarnia-Lambton, Nickel Belt and Kingston and the Islands.

The member from Durham said that he is hoping and willing to work together when it comes to committee. Let's hope that's the case. We have seen several times before where the government has dug their heels in. This isn't the time to do this. This is a really important bill that is setting the stage for children and youth who utilize our services within the province. I'm hoping that we can do that, because there really is a lot missing from this legislation that is being left to regulation and will never see a day of debate in this House. It will never see consultation. That's a lot to be left to regulation. I have concerns about that.

There are a few pieces that I didn't have the ability to touch on. This is a huge bill, and an hour really goes by very quickly. I didn't get the ability to talk about extra-provincial rules, which are abilities to act on orders from other jurisdictions; the lack of foster and adoptive families; and support for youth leaving care. Some modernizing language is needed. For example, the word "apprehension" is still being used when a child is taken into care.

There's still so much to talk about. I know that members of my caucus will be raising these issues as the debate continues to roll out through the House. But again, Speaker, the lack of legislation, the lack of enforcement, and the several times the word "may" is used are very concerning to us. We need to ensure that we get this legislation right and that it serves our most vulnerable population: the children, youth and families of Ontario.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Further debate?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm going to be sharing my time this afternoon with the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry and with the MPP for Beaches-East York.

I'm going to lead off, though, on some remarks this afternoon on Bill 89, the child, youth and family services act—a substantive overhaul, as the members have noted, of our child protection legislation.

The proposed legislation does several things. It increases the age of protection to include all 16- and 17-year-olds.

It affirms the rights of children, acknowledges the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and sets clear expectations for service providers as to how they should work with children, youth and families.

If passed, the act would strengthen the child welfare and child and family services system by strengthening the ministry's ability to hold children's aid societies accountable for the services they provide. In particular, it would strengthen the ministry's ability to hold CASs accountable for the management of the public funds with which they are entrusted. Specifically, it would support First Nation, Métis and Inuit children, youth and families through the delivery of culturally appropriate supports that respect indigenous cultures, heritages and traditions.

An issue has been raised in the comments already this afternoon around this whole issue of amalgamating children's aid societies, and I think maybe we should spend a few minutes on that. Currently, there are 47 children's aid societies across Ontario, including nine indigenous child well-being societies. Since 2011, 16 such societies have voluntarily amalgamated to form seven new societies. We've obviously been tracking what has happened with the amalgamated societies to review and monitor their performance, and what we've seen is that all of the amalgamated societies have been able to operate within their approved budget allocations or, in some cases, even generate surpluses.

We've also seen that amalgamations support more consistent service delivery and access to high-quality services regardless of where a child, youth or family resides in the province. I know I have, in my constituency office in Guelph, had people come in to talk to me about how they maybe had interaction with a children's aid society in a different jurisdiction—the one that we share, Guelph and Wellington—and that there are differences in the details of the service provision from area to area within the province. What we do see with amalgamation is that it supports a more consistent service delivery and access to high-quality services, regardless of where a child, youth or family resides.

The proposed legislation would give the minister the authority to compel two or more children's aid societies to amalgamate when it is in the public's interest to do so. However, it is really important to emphasize that no decisions have been made on any society amalgamations at this time. In fact, I'm sure that the minister would be looking at, when it is in the public interest, what the consequences of that would be. But the minister would have that authority going forward.

One of the things that I am really excited about is raising the age of protection. If you think about the model on which the original act was structured, we're talking about a time when it was quite typical for children and youth to leave school at 16, when the legal school-leaving age was 16. Because 16 was the sort of notional transition to a job and adulthood, that's what the act says. But of course, that's no longer true. The school-leaving age has been raised; clearly, most students are not leaving school now at 16, and there's a misfit now between the way modern society works and what the act says.

So we're going to raise the age of protection to include all 16- and 17-year-olds. If the act is passed, we expect to proclaim that provision around raising the age of protection starting in September 2017. While it's difficult to get an exact handle on it, we anticipate that up to 1,600 youth will benefit from raising the age of protection by the end of the first year of implementation alone.

What that means is that 16- and 17-year-olds will have access to child protection services, including services through a voluntary agreement with a children's aid society. So, if passed, these provisions would bring Ontario in line with other provinces and territories as the

eighth province to raise the age of protection. As I say, given my past experience as a school board trustee and working with the local family and children's services agency, which is what children's aid is called in our jurisdiction, the disconnect you get with the old rules is very problematic, and I'm pleased that this will change.

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One of the other things I want to mention very quickly is that the legislation will also provide children, youth and families with the right to access information in the files about them—because historically it has been a problem for families to get access to information about their own children, and for youth to get access to the information that is in their own file—and to make it easier for one service to communicate with another service and share information. That freeing-up of information sharing, both with families and other agencies, will improve the service that children and youth are receiving.

I'm very excited about this bill. I think we're going to be able to make some long-overdue changes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: It gives me great pleasure to rise today on behalf of my constituents in Cambridge to speak to the very important Bill 89, the child, youth and family services act.

I really wanted to give a bit of context around why I feel this bill is so important. Speaker, when I started off my nursing career many decades ago, I was at the Hospital for Sick Children, now known as SickKids. That was where some of my initial contacts were with children who needed protection of family and children services. I worked very closely with them. I was on an infant medical floor, and many of the children who came in were victims of neglect and abuse, so I was very involved with many of the multidisciplinary teams. We spent much time together to sort out some of the issues.

I know with that background that the welfare of our children in the province of Ontario has always been of very personal importance to me, as it is to probably every single member in this House. I don't think we can argue that.

One of the things that I'm very excited about is the increase of the age of protection to include all 16- and 17-year-olds. Certainly with the number of children I've raised in my own family, I've had the odd occasion where one of my children will come home and say a 16-year-old or a 17-year-old friend has been kicked out of their home with nowhere to go. We've been able to provide some protection for a little while at our home until we got services organized or until they were able to work out some of the issues they had in their family.

I know with this legislation that, if passed, we expect to proclaim the provisions related to the age of protection starting this September, and it can't come soon enough as far as I'm concerned.

As has been mentioned, we anticipate that up to 1,600 youth will benefit from raising the age of protection by the end of the first year of implementation, and 16-year-

olds and 17-year-olds will have access to child protection services, including services through a voluntary agreement with a children's aid society.

This last weekend, I participated in a fundraiser for Argus Residence, in my home riding of Cambridge, who provide services for homeless youth starting around ages 16 and 17, leading up to when they're young adults. This is an incredible organization, Speaker. Not only did they provide a safe, secure residence for those youth, but they offer so many more services to be able to try and get those youth forward in their schooling, trying to teach them job skills and giving them a place of security that they could develop these skills.

One example they told us about during the fundraiser this past weekend is a store called Uptown Thrift. Each and every year they are able to provide employment for 24 to 25 of their youth in residence, to be able to help them secure a job and have that experience for the future.

We all understand how important it is for our 16- and 17-year-olds to be able to have the support system, to be able to deal with some of their issues, to be able to go back to school, to address issues at home and have the support services that they need to be able to move forward and get the most out of their life.

I'm proud that these provisions will bring Ontario in line with other provinces and territories, as the eighth province to raise the age of protection. The proposed changes aim to help young people by extending their access to child protection services so that they have better outcomes as they transition into adulthood. I can't be more in support of this. As I said, I've had long experience with children in protection through my various roles in the community, so I know how important this is. I'm pretty sure that we will see a lot of support amongst our members here in the House.

The other thing I really wanted to mention today was how this legislation affects adoptions. Again, many, many families want to open their doors, their homes and their hearts to having a child find stability through permanent homes and relationships that are meaningful to them. Recently, a couple of friends of mine in my community took on the role of adopting with two sisters that were aged six and eight, so a little older. They were able to then have that adoption pass by. Now, my friends are their permanent parents and their forever home. It has worked really well, and I really wanted to talk about them for a moment in the context of what this legislation would provide.

This legislation would give the children who are being adopted a stronger voice in decisions being made about their relationships with birth families and others who are important to them post-adoption. The two girls that I've referenced had this opportunity through a very nicely put out agreement with the forever parents and the birth parents. I know now they've been with their adoptive parents for three years. They have a long-standing agreement with the birth parents which is working very well. All parties agreed to it. The girls have benefited from seeing their birth mother every so often and other

members of that family. My friends have gone out of their way to ensure that those relationships are supported and looked after. The girls themselves have transitioned well because they have had that voice in saying what their future is.

In addition, we're currently conducting a review of the adoption service delivery system, which will consider the option of centralizing adoption services in Ontario. The report and recommendations of this review are expected in the spring of 2017. I think that we all look forward to seeing those pieces. Our goal is to dramatically improve the delivery of adoption services in Ontario.

Lastly, I really just want to provide my great support to ensuring that this bill moves forward, so we can see more 16- and 17-year-olds under the age of protection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It gives me great pleasure to follow the two ministers here. We had a front bench, a third bench and now me in the back bench—a great straight line of debate right here in the House today.

Interjection.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Ba-dum-bum. Thank you, Minister.

I'm delighted to speak to the Child, Youth and Family Services Act in Bill 89, a very comprehensive piece of legislation. I want to address a number of issues that have arisen, in part by the previous speakers.

First off, this bill was occasioned by the Auditor General's 2015 report. I sit on the public accounts committee and had a chance to review the auditor's findings. It was very clear that the children's aid societies and the provision of youth services could be done a lot more efficiently. We're taking on the recommendations made by the Auditor General at the time, and we're encompassing so many of those recommendations into this bill. We've also done extensive consultations across children's aid societies, the general public and youth justice workers in order to bring this bill, a very comprehensive piece of legislation, forward.

One area I'm particularly interested in is the whole Child Protection Information Network. It has been in development for a number of years, but now it's being formalized in this bill and there is some more rigour being put into the development of our Child Protection Information Network. It is primarily designed, of course, so that kids don't fall through cracks, as sometimes does happen. This will allow all children's aid societies across the province to put information under a centralized database with protections in place to protect privacy but also to give greater access to information between agencies. Between the police and children aid societies and parents, they can access this crucial information to make sure young people are being treated appropriately.

There was tremendous consultation in the development of this process across the ministry. Front-line workers and union representatives: They all came to the table for input. They continue to work with stakeholders to improve front-line staff experience with the CPIN

program. There have been something in the order of 80 enhancements since it was first introduced in 2014—80 enhancements to that program to make it work seamlessly, and better. That's been an incredible boost.

1500

I want to talk a little bit about the impact on youth justice services. I had the pleasure, last Friday, of going to visit an organization called Boost Child and Youth Advocacy Centre. This is an extraordinary agency in downtown Toronto that looks after youth who have been sexually abused, who have been trafficked, who are addicted and who need help. They see people in that organization as young as 12. Extending the age to 16 and 17 so that they can continue to capture this within the child advocacy system is extraordinary important.

I met a constituent, actually—she came to my East York Memorial skating party a couple of weeks ago and was telling me about this incredible organization, and I wanted to go down and see it. They have under one roof wraparound services of intake workers, where the police can bring someone to a safer zone where they can interview a child who has been abused or is undergoing incredible trauma in their life, where you have the police, the children's aid society, psychologists, therapists and intake workers who can provide case management and a friendly face that a child can be comfortable with, and help them through and help the families through what are always very traumatic experiences.

So I met a constituent, Nancy Cottenden, and she invited me to come down. I visited on Friday and met the president and CEO, Karyn Kennedy. It's extraordinary work that they're doing down there. I had the tour; Lindsay Jolie gave me a tour of the facility, and I was just amazed at the incredible outcomes that they're able to assist with.

They are a piece of the puzzle in youth protection and youth justice services. I have a very good friend, Cheryl Milne, who used to be counsel for Justice for Children and Youth. Cheryl for years has been working diligently in this sector, representing young kids, young adults—15, 16, 17 years old, helping them to exercise their rights within the system with regard to their parental, their schooling, and assisting them. Cheryl is now at the University of Toronto in the constitutional centre, but I had an opportunity to go and meet the people from Justice for Children and Youth at a number of fundraisers I've attended and get a better sense of how they are great advocates and can work with an agency like Boost to ensure children are kept safe, don't fall through the cracks and remain healthy in our society.

I also wanted to briefly touch on the adoption issue. I think this is absolutely critical, the new work we're doing in the adoption sector. We are under review, but this legislation will create more mechanisms so that adoptive services can be more responsive, more transparent and more fair.

I've had a number of constituents come to talk to me in the past about how outdated some of the rules around adoption have been. For instance, it's very difficult to do

interracial adoptions in the province of Ontario. It's frowned upon. I have families who want to get a person of colour adopted into their family, but they were finding difficulties and restrictions for it. It might be just one children's aid society, but it's something that needs to be modernized. We need to have equitable experiences across the province of Ontario so that kids can find a way into a home and be able to deal, in future life, with their birth parents in a productive way, both for the needs they may have for medical records, but also to get to know them.

Thank you very much, Speaker. I hope we have support for this great bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to stand and debate Bill 89, the Supporting Children, Youth and Families Act, 2016. I'm actually going to be speaking at length about this later, so I'm going to condense my comments right now to three concerns that have been raised to me and my office recently.

One is about amalgamation. We had Bruce children's aid and Grey children's aid; they amalgamated in the past. It's quite an arduous process, as you can imagine, to bring two large organizations together, to do all of that transition and to come out the other end. I think that went very well. We met with the executive director, Phyllis Lovell, and the past chairperson, Gary Harron. I know the amount of work they spent to get this and to do it, with all of the focus remaining on the children and the services for children.

They're concerned about a broader amalgamation just for the sake of amalgamation, perhaps to save money because of all of the waste and mismanagement of this Liberal government. That takes away from the children.

I was critic three years ago, and they raised the issue of board liability. Volunteers are actually on the hook—the only board, I believe, that is a volunteer board, in all the province, that is on the hook for liability in regard to the budget. That, then, limits who will come forward, the people who are able to volunteer to these. As we all know, volunteers provide so much to our province. Those are things that, again, we were hoping for in this bill, and hopefully during committee we can speak about those and make sure we find ways to improve those systems.

The other one is budget limitations. What I'm hearing from a lot of people is that the roles are not being filled if there are stress leaves, if there are people who are retiring. They're trying, in many cases, to save money, to get to that balanced budget, by not filling in. Speaker, the same number of kids are there, the same name of children in need are there, and yet people are now doubling and tripling up on their workload. Just recently, folks were in from Nipissing and Parry Sound who are locked out currently, and they gave me examples of that: that right now—they have been out for a long time—those kids are the ones who are suffering.

Hopefully, through this and in my next 20 minutes, I'll talk to some of these issues and find ways that we can

improve this legislation, with the focus always being the children at the front line and the programs and services they receive.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to be able to add my thoughts in response to the thoughtful debate we've been having this afternoon. I have so many thoughts on this, and I'm looking forward to having my time later during debate to really have a fulsome conversation. Of course, I do have some initial thoughts based on what we have heard.

The member opposite talked about this being a comprehensive bill and hopes that it would make things more efficient. I'd caution the member that efficiency sounds great, but if their goal is to speed this through the process without putting appropriate safeguards in, or just leaving everything to regulation—"Well, let's get it through quickly, but don't worry, we'll figure it all out later"—that's problematic. We're talking about children, youth and families in this bill, and we want to ensure that they are getting the best protections and services, of course, that they deserve, that they should have.

We had heard earlier in the conversation about sweeping powers being given to ministers down the road, whoever they may be, and giving them powers without the responsibility—that they may do this, they may do that, they can do this, but where does it say that they have to do this? Where is the action piece? It's giving them the power without the responsibility to protect the children in question, to best serve families.

We heard about reviews, but again, without that time period—again, back to efficiency. We don't want rush. We want what is appropriate here: the best service for families and children.

Man, time goes by. I'm looking forward to my 20 minutes because I really want to delve into this, especially when it comes to 16- and 17-year-olds and making sure that they are under the care umbrella in the way that best serves them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: It has been fantastic listening to everybody's comments on this bill. The one thing that I do want to say is that it's very, very clear there's a common thread that is happening on all sides of the House, and that is about our interest for children and our communities.

It's extremely important that we do place the interests of children first, and that's exactly what the purpose of this legislation was: to make sure that children are at the centre of the services that they are receiving. It will increase, as we've already spoken about, to children who are 16 and 17 years old.

If we look at just the specific piece on youth identity, the member of the opposition from, I believe, Thornhill had some concerns about that piece within the bill. She said that many community organizations are raising concerns about this specific aspect, and she's concerned

that the Liberal government hasn't done enough to address communities' concerns. But the member didn't actually specify what the concerns were, so I would be interested in hearing a little bit more about that.

Bill 89 includes a range of aspects of a child's unique identity which must be weighed when providing services to that child. The aspects include race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, family diversity, disability, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. If there isn't another way that we can focus on a child's interests and a child's identity—it is laid out in that piece of the legislation in particular. I don't know how else we can include children more.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do have lots more to say on this bill. I could go on all afternoon.

1510

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I've been listening to this afternoon's debate. I find it striking that, with all the comments from the Liberal members, they fail to mention that this bill imposes the ability for the minister to amalgamate, fold up and change the boundaries of children's aid societies.

They also fail to mention that the minister has this new, broad authority to impose members on local boards of children's aid societies. The minister also has this new authority to impose shared services contracts on children's aid societies.

I know that the member for Beaches–East York mentioned that he's in public accounts and that he heard the Auditor General's comments on children's aid societies. Well, I would like to ask the member for Beaches–East York: Where in the Auditor General's report does it say that she recommends the amalgamation of children's aids under the imposition of the minister? Where does it say in the Auditor General's report that the minister should have the authority to impose board members?

We've seen what has happened with this in the past, with these shared services contracts. Surely every member in this House has heard the member from Oxford talk about the Ontario housing authority and the shared services contracts, and the added expense that it imposes.

Last but not least, everybody welcomes extending the age to 18, but all the children's aid societies I've spoken with are worried because it doesn't articulate what services will be provided to these 16- and 17-year-olds.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for the government's response, I'm pleased to recognize the presence in the House this afternoon of a former member who served in the 38th and 39th provincial Parliaments as the member for Ottawa West–Nepean: Jim Watson. Welcome to the Legislature once again. Great to have you here.

Now, to respond for the government, the member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker. Thanks for putting on that added pressure. This is one of the great orators of Canada, and now I have to follow with his watching eye.

I'm delighted to be able to rise on behalf of our government for the speakers who we heard. Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound: I didn't know that he had a Boost organization. I'm delighted, because it really is one of the most incredible—

M^{me} France Gélinas: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order: the member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, I don't believe we have quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is there a quorum present?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): A quorum being present, the member from Beaches–East York can continue with his two-minute reply.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I also want to thank the member from Oshawa. She talked about the regulation-making authority of the minister under this bill, which is of course what allows it to be nimble. This is a youth-centric piece of legislation. As new situations arise, we need to be nimble and not have to come back to the House to change legislation every time, so the regulatory authority in that case is very important.

Also, to my friend the member from Kingston and the Islands, thank you. I'm looking forward to your time to speak on this bill. You're a great advocate in your community and I'm sure you'll have excellent input into this debate.

Finally, the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington: We didn't mention those things because those aren't issues that are of prime importance to us on this side of the House. They may be his issues. He can raise them all he wants. No, we didn't talk about the ability of our minister to put a children's aid society into supervision if they're not doing the job right. The reality, again, is that we're back to the central focus of this bill: to protect children and youth. Being able to replace people on boards who aren't doing their jobs properly or put into supervision if they're mismanaging—this provides accounting, oversight, efficiency. Those are the things that we know that the Auditor General talked about in her report and were absolutely essential that we get into this bill and modernize it. That is what we have done. I look forward to the member opposite's comments if they find some areas lacking. We look forward to it, and we'll listen to their comments and take adequate approaches.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I certainly appreciate the opportunity to talk a bit about Bill 89. It's a bill that's garnered some attention in my riding of Haldimand–Norfolk, much of it positive. We're moving forward on child welfare issues, as we've just heard, in part as the result of

the Auditor General reporting on a number of deficiencies in our system and making a number of recommendations to that effect.

We're told that this existing legislation is 30 years old. In fact, the opposition feels this is very important to deal with. We're the only jurisdiction left in Canada that does not protect children up to the age of 18.

I have trouble getting my head around defining someone up to age 18, defining a 17-year-old, for example, as a child. We had a number of young fellows in the gallery just recently, probably in that age category. I don't consider them children, but as I understand it, the legal definition for purposes of this particular piece of proposed legislation—just short of 18, you're considered a child.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's child and youth; don't forget the "youth" part.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes, there are definitions for youth and definitions for young persons in here as well. When you've got a bill that's 270 pages long, there's lots of room to put in lots of definitions about what we're talking about here.

Many of my colleagues through private members' bills have attempted in the past—this goes back a number of years—to provide protection for those young people just short of age 18 that need some help.

Now, we see the goals of the government in bringing forward this bill. Number one is raising the protection from 16 to 18 for those more vulnerable children in unsafe living conditions, to support them in education, and to reduce homelessness and human trafficking. The second goal is strengthening the focus on early intervention, helping to prevent children and families from reaching crisis situations in the home. Number three, and this has been mentioned a number of times, is making services more culturally appropriate for all children—and youth, I might mention: "Youth" is right in the title of this bill, in case anybody missed that—including indigenous children, black children, youth, to help ensure they receive the best possible support. And number four is improving oversight of service providers, including children's aid societies, so that children and youth receive consistent, high-quality services across the province.

Again, I think what's very important is raising that age of protection—it's too bad it has taken this long—up to just short of age 18.

The second point, early intervention, is a good concept if it's done in the right way. We don't need any heavy-handedness on behalf of a children's aid officer. Over the years, I've had a number of complaints to my office about the children's aid service. I think we've all heard many of these stories.

1520

The third point: I am surprised there would be a need to make the services more culturally appropriate. I think that's already a law. All children, obviously, should be treated equally regardless of colour, race or religion.

The fourth point, on oversight: I've sat through a number of meetings with constituents. I've listened to

stories of alleged unfair investigations from the children's aid society. In many cases I am hearing one side of the story. I meet regularly with our local Haldimand-Norfolk children's aid service to get that balance.

Obviously, we have to get the children out of the worst homes, but at the same time, realizing that assisting for young people to stay in the home and to stay with the family is, in my view, anyway, that's the ideal situation. The state can't handle everything.

But I do get pressure. I do hear from people. They want their kids back. Over the years, they've demonstrated out in front of my office. They've demonstrated in downtown Simcoe, where my office is located, at the corner of Norfolk and Robinson, the main intersection.

To get back to some of the reasons for these problems, many of the calls may be the result of separated or divorced parents, for example, trying to cause trouble for the other spouse by phoning children's aid with these allegations. Children's aid has a mandate to investigate, but in the absence of any evidence, they question the need to continually investigate when you know that the parents are hostile to each other. Under law, it's a crime to make a false statement to the police or to the courts, but myself and my staff feel that there are false statements being made to the children's aid societies, so we've got to have a balance and get the children out of hostile situations.

Having said that, I do give credit to my local Haldimand-Norfolk children's aid society, its employees and the volunteer board. I attend the annual meeting. I have meetings in my office as well.

I'll mention, as well, that just on the weekend, I ran into a former MPP in my riding, Gord Miller. He's 92. As I recall, Gord was on the children's aid society board, I think, when I was first elected.

So, Speaker, here it is. I don't mean to hold this up as a prop. It is 270 pages, this proposed legislation, Bill 89, An Act to enact the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2016, to amend and repeal the Child and Family Services Act and to make related amendments to other Acts. That was put right in the title, and I can understand why, because there are something like 36 amendments in here to other pieces of legislation. I admit I have not gone through all 270 pages.

I'd ask everyone present to turn to part I, section 1(1). The purpose of the act: "To promote the best interests, protection and well-being of children." It's kind of too bad we can't leave it at that. We do have to have another 270 pages and so many additional clauses.

It's again important, and I think this bears repeating—it was presented just a few minutes ago; this would be part I, section 1(1)(iii)—to take into account "a child's or young person's race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, family diversity, disability, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression"—and that phrase alone has generated a fair bit of input into my office, and a number of letters and emails.

The legislation addresses issues with respect to First Nations, Inuit and Métis people, again to recognize cul-

ture, heritage, traditions, connection to their communities, and the concept of "extended family."

I was really intrigued to read this. I guess I didn't have too much to do on the weekend. I spent my time reading Bill 89.

"Extended family" with respect to native people means a person to whom a child is related, including spousal relation, adoption, and, in the case of First Nations and Inuit—now, this says I-N-U-K. It's important to read the legislation. I just found a spelling mistake in this legislation. I do want to point that out.

Where was I? The extended family of a First Nations child, or an Inuk—which I think should read "Inuit"—or a Métis child includes any member of a band of which the child is a member.

Down my way, we have Six Nations. My riding is south of Hamilton and Brantford. Six Nations is the largest native community in Canada. I'm not sure if it's 25,000 or 30,000. It's the largest community down our way. The extended family, as I assume, reading this legislation, would include all 25,000 people of the membership of Six Nations.

We have a smaller community right next door, the Mississaugas of the New Credit.

Something just came up. In the title, we're talking about "child" and "youth." The legislation talks about a "young person." I was surprised to see the definition of a "young person." For the purposes of this legislation, a "young person" means "a person who is or, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, appears to be 12 or older but younger than 18 and who is charged with or found guilty of an offence under the Youth Criminal Justice Act (Canada) or the Provincial Offences Act."

When I think of young people, I don't limit them just to their rap sheet. I just think it's important to know what some of these definitions say.

Again, there is an interpretation of the word "parent":

"(2) Unless this act provides otherwise, a reference in this act to a parent of a child is deemed to be a reference to,

"(a) the person who has lawful custody of the child"—and it goes on and on about lawful custody. I never really thought about my mom that way, but that's the definition of a "parent" in this legislation.

One last thing I'll mention: Under "communication," a child in care has a right to speak in private with, or to visit or receive visits—this brings it kind of close to home; there's a list here—from "(iv) a member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario or of the Parliament of Canada;"

If we are talking to these children, I'm not saying to try and wade through all 270 pages—I clearly didn't—but it's important to know what's in this legislation. I think it's important.

For the record, I'll ask that that spelling mistake be corrected in this legislation.

I mentioned the interest in my riding with respect to this piece of proposed legislation. This is our job, as MPPs, to not only read the legislation and talk about it in

here, but we have to talk to the people who have elected us. There can't be room for error on this, and there can't be misunderstandings.

I received a letter—a number of letters, actually. This is from one of my constituents from Dunnville. It starts out:

"Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I really appreciate it.

"Bill 89 in Ontario will replace the Child and Family Services Act by changing the matters to be considered in determining the best interests of a child. It removes 'the religious faith, if any, in which the child is being raised,' and adds"—and we've heard this a number of times—"the following long and confusing list: 'race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, family diversity, disability, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.'"

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I will point out that my definition of "creed" is really—well, I think of the Apostles' Creed, for example, of my church. It's kind of a litany or a rendition of the core principles of the religion. "Creed" or "religion"—I consider that kind of the same word.

My constituent goes on to say, "There is a potentially dangerous ramification from this change: The children of parents who refuse to affirm 'progressive' gender ideology may be more likely to be considered 'in need of protection.'"

It goes on to say, "Under the act, a child suffering or 'at risk of suffering' mental or emotional harm and whose parents do not provide 'treatment or access to treatment' is a child in need of protection under the law. The children's aid society must investigate evidence that children may be in need of protection, and a court can make orders governing the care of children deemed to be in need of protection."

This letter goes on and on in this vein. It's something that we all have to consider.

My constituent concludes in the letter, "This bill is ideological and puts family integrity at risk."

I'll leave my constituent's concerns to this body and for others to deliberate. I will forward this letter, and so many other letters that have come in, to the minister responsible, for a reply.

We know that with respect to our children's aids—and I think of my local one—they really got hit a few years ago on the financial front. There was a four- or five-year clampdown on money allocated to our local Haldimand-Norfolk children's aid. They were forced to make some pretty dramatic cutbacks, primarily, as I recall, in that age group of 16, 17, and 18, who wanted to perhaps continue their studies in school but didn't have the money.

As I recall, under part III in the bill, Funding and Accountability, it comes up with some ways to make some administrative savings. As we know, it provides the legal authority to compel amalgamations and dissolutions of societies when it is in the public interest to do so.

That was quite a debate locally, about a year ago, with our children's aid. I certainly raised it at the annual meeting at that time. We got wind of it back then.

Can transfer all or any part of a society's operations; can appoint and replace a minority of the board, and appoint a supervisor—we just saw that happen with the Ontario Processing Vegetable Growers association on Friday, where the minister responsible pretty well disbanded the board and brought in a supervisor.

The minister can require a society to cease an activity, or require corrective action, or suspend, amend or revoke a society's designation. That's pretty heavy-duty stuff as well.

Enter into accountability agreements—it provides for no personal liability of a board of directors or an officer or employee of a society for acting in good faith.

There's really a bit of a concerning list here, Speaker. There's actually quite a bit to deal with, and that's not surprising in a bill that is 270 pages long.

I do want to reiterate our support for this business of providing protection for those young people defined here as "children," up to the age of 18, if needed.

There were several private members' bills. MPP Jim McDonnell put forward Bill 32, the Right to Care Act, to offer that kind of protection. A previous member of this House, MPP Rod Jackson—his Bill 8 passed second reading and committee during the last Parliament with all-party support. It's very, very important stuff.

I am running out of time, but I just want to reiterate that in fact our MPP McDonnell talked in his summary that in a challenging time during their development, 16-year-olds and 17-year-olds deserve the right to access care services if they need them. The alternative could be youth homelessness or deterioration of their physical and mental health, which prevent them from achieving their potential and affect local communities. That is the goal of this legislation, and, in many cases, in my view, providing adequate money for them perhaps to go back to school with the backup of a safe environment.

So, here we are. We did hear on pre-budget hearings from the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies. There are 47 of them across the province, and I think we would do well to also investigate what they have to say.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise in response to the comments from the member from Haldimand-Norfolk about Bill 89, Supporting Children, Youth and Families Act. I want to commend the member for actually taking the time this weekend to read this bill because, as he pointed out, it is a hefty piece of legislation, 270 pages. There's a lot of content in this bill, a lot of substance in this bill, and trying to digest that down into 20 minutes in a speech is challenging because there is a lot in here to discuss.

One of the issues that was raised during the earlier debate by my colleague the member for Hamilton Mountain, when she was doing her lead on behalf of the NDP caucus, is that this bill is presented as an effort to address all of the problems that we have seen in the Child and Family Services Act. And despite its length, we heard that the bill actually repeats a lot of the language

that was in the former piece of legislation, so there remains a lot of work to be done to really fix the problems.

One of our big concerns about this legislation is the amount of times "may" is used instead of "shall"—the latitude that the minister has to decide whether or not to take the actions that are set out in the act—and also the fact that much of this bill shifts what needs to happen to regulation rather than legislation. So while there are certainly welcome pieces to this legislation, in particular the coverage of 16- to 17-year-olds, much more needs to be done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you as well to the member from Haldimand-Norfolk and the member from London West. I have to echo what the member from London West said about the member from Haldimand-Norfolk: Well done on reading the bill.

There have been so many things that have already been said about this bill, and I just want to go back a little bit to the section on children's aid societies and accountability. These changes are transformational—I think there's absolutely no question about that—for the operation of children's aid societies. We know the public expects the best from our children's aid societies.

I want to also acknowledge my own children's aid society in Kingston and the Islands. They have done an absolutely fantastic job of transitioning to the CPIN system. I know it's been challenging. I have had some discussions with some of their workers, and they have done a really stellar job at getting through that process. I'm very, very pleased about that.

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Bill 89 is going to strengthen the ministry's ability to hold children's aid societies accountable for the service that they provide. As has already been reiterated, it was done in response to the 2015 Auditor General's report. We know that more accountability, monitoring and oversight was definitely needed in the sector, and that's what we've sought to build into this legislation.

The legislation would give the minister authority to appoint or replace a minority of board members, including the chair, and to appoint a supervisor to temporarily operate and manage a society if deemed necessary. I do need to underline "if deemed necessary." It's not something that we would go into lightly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Perth-Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Speaker. It comes as no surprise to me that the member from Haldimand-Norfolk knows what he's talking about because he does study the legislation, probably as much as or more than anyone else in this House, when it comes before us and when he has to speak to it.

He certainly has done an outstanding job of the agriculture critic file for our caucus. If we can help him out at all, he accepts that. Certainly I have told him about different terms that we use in agriculture that maybe

aren't common down in his part of the riding that he has found somewhat amusing but also helpful.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that after 13 years of audits, the Auditor General found that the minister was still not monitoring the delivery of services to ensure that children are receiving adequate treatment. It just goes on and on. This government seems to have an issue about trying to improve the lives of Ontarians until an Auditor General or someone else gets involved with these types of things. Thirteen years is a long time.

Even the 2016 report of the Auditor General found that the Ministry of Children and Youth Services "does not measure individual agency performance against targets, and does not effectively monitor client outcomes or overall program performance against measurable and meaningful targets."

I find this not surprising because, as I said, it seems that someone like the Auditor General has to get involved before this government does do anything. It's unfortunate because we're dealing with the lives of young folks. Certainly this has to be addressed sooner than later.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I want to thank the member from Haldimand-Norfolk for lending his expertise and his analysis of this piece of legislation. We were talking earlier this morning. Both of us have tried to do outreach to the family and children's services agencies that are in our ridings. I think that's an important piece—bringing their knowledge and lived experience in the communities across this province to a piece of legislation like this. There is a long-standing history and disconnect between the legislation that has been developed in this place to protect children and then the reality of how that legislation plays itself out in communities.

I do want to thank, of course, our critic from Hamilton Mountain, who has been a very strong advocate for lending a new lens to child protection legislation in Ontario, and as well the provincial advocate, who has weighed in and lent his opinion about this piece of legislation.

I do think, now that we have two outstanding pieces of advocacy work—that being Jordan's Principle and Katelynn's Principle—in the province of Ontario, that those new initiatives, if you will, those new eyes, that fresh look on how to protect children in the province should have been applied to Bill 89, the Supporting Children, Youth and Families Act. I will be addressing some of the gaps that this legislation brings to the fore.

We have to remember that looking at a piece of legislation which is designed with the intent of protecting children has to put children and their families at the centre. I think the member tried to make this point in his commentary. I thank him for that, and I look forward to this debate this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Haldimand-Norfolk to reply.

Mr. Toby Barrett: This feedback was way too complimentary. I really only read the first 21 pages out of 270, although I went to the back and discovered the schedule. Take a look at that schedule. It goes on for page after page after page. And then there are all those amendments to the other bills. There are people who know an awful lot more about this than I do in this Legislature.

I'll mention my colleague MPP Sylvia Jones, who made a great point. I think she was saying, go past just the explanatory note in the legislation. Explanatory notes here are positive. However, the legal system doesn't use those explanatory notes at the beginning of legislation; it uses the final law. So we the lawmakers, if we can refer to ourselves that way, have to get this right because, in my view, there is no room for error. We don't need more court cases, and I really feel we don't need unnecessary controversy.

I'll just pick up on the mention of CPIN, the Child Protection Information Network. Trying to pull that together for 47 children's aids—this wasn't a problem 110 years ago. I think it was 110 years ago when the Haldimand children's aid was first established. It was probably the one and only social agency down in my area for 75 years. The Norfolk children's aid was established later. And then the two merged. Now we try to coordinate across the province, given the mobility of people; hence the importance of getting the computer networking systems running properly. I know there have been some pilots, but there's a lot more work to be done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have about 20 minutes to try to deal with this bill. This is a very thick bill with much to it. The effect of what this bill is going to do in the years to come could be quite significant. It's unfortunate that we're limited to the amount of time which we are at this particular point—the 20 minutes of debate—because I don't think that gives justice to what has to be done.

Let me try to break this down to a couple of parts. The first part is, with this bill—and I will predict it today—we are delegating most of the authority that we have as legislators, when it comes to putting real definition to what this bill can do, to the minister. I think that's a real problem. When you're dealing with issues around children's aid, I think it's extremely important that what we, as legislators, set out to do should be what guides the principles of the bill and what guides any regulation written after in order to give substance to the bill. In this particular bill, what we've essentially done is we're giving, as legislators, authority to the minister—not just the Lieutenant Governor in Council, but the minister—the ability to put whatever they want into this bill, when it comes to the sections that are opened up, in a way that may suit his or her aims, whims, in the future. I think that's really dangerous when it comes to the issue of dealing with children. We all know it.

As legislators, we have people who come into our constituency offices on a pretty regular basis, unfortu-

nately, who come in to see us in crisis. Or they come in to see us because they feel that the children's aid is not taking something too seriously or the children's aid is taking something the other way around. I get them coming in my office saying, "Oh, my God, children's aid is coming down on us, and this is not fair. We're the parents, so we should know what's best." And then you get the flip side, where people come into your office and say, "The children's aid is not taking seriously the complaints about how this child is being treated." The children's aid is in a really tough spot when it comes to taking care of the welfare of children, because there are some really hard views on both sides of the issue.

So I think it's incumbent upon us, as legislators, to clearly define in the bill what it is that we're trying to give the minister the power to do, or children's aid the power to do. For us as legislators to say, "Oh, we'll just delegate our authority to the minister and we'll trust that, in the future, everything will be fine," I think is a disservice to kids and, quite frankly, is a bit of a disservice to democracy.

1550

You've got to remember that the British parliamentary system—which, as Winston Churchill once said, is the best of the worst systems of democracy ever designed—decided that it was going to take the power away from the king, and that power was going to come to us, the people, the commoners, through our Legislatures or the House of Commons, as they call it in Britain, but for us, the Ontario Legislature. The idea was that we, with good counsel, with the work that we do as legislators, would try to make sure that we put in place laws that are reflective of the people, and that the law works for the people of Ontario—in this case, children. But what we do when we delegate our authority back to the minister is that, essentially, we're returning to the bad old days before, I would argue, William II or Queen Anne. Up to that point, the kings had ultimate authority to do what they wanted. We're going back to that, because we are, bill by bill, delegating our authority as legislators back to cabinet or, in this case, back to the minister himself or herself. I think that's a disservice to democracy and also a disservice to the kids.

Let me give you but one example that I think is very troubling. We have decided, in one section of this bill, to delegate the authority of this Legislature not to the Lieutenant Governor in Council, which means that it's at least got to go to cabinet—which I still think is a problem, but at least there's a larger group of people to give it sort of a one-see—but we're actually turning around and we're saying that the minister will have the right to designate individuals to meet tasks of a residential placement advisory committee, which sounds pretty innocuous, and the transfer regulations. Really? We're going to give the minister the ability to do that without cabinet even knowing, let alone the Legislature? Is that a good idea?

I think that the process we're going through in this Legislature, where we do not allow bills like this

sufficient time in committee—we don't travel these bills into the community so that somebody who is concerned about children's aid issues in this legislation, be it in Sioux Lookout or Cornwall or anywhere in between, has the ability to come to point out what that would mean. What would that mean to the average citizen? What would that mean to the child? What would that mean to the parents? What does it mean to the system?

We're going to delegate the authority of this Legislature directly into the hands of a minister? This minister may be well-intentioned—I would argue probably. I know most members in this Legislature, no matter what party they sit in, try to do the right thing; I have no doubt about that. But all of a sudden to say that the minister has the ability to do something that normally took the approval of the Legislature I think is a really big problem. I would say that this is something we should not allow. It's a pattern, which I'll come to in a minute.

The other thing this bill does—and I'm going to tell you, I've gone through this twice. We've created two aboriginal children's aid organizations in my riding: Payukotayno, which does the James Bay, and Kunuwanimano, which does all of the urban children living in places like Timmins. I've got to tell you, those children's aids are very, very different when it comes to the communities they serve. What we're saying in this particular bill is that we're going to give the minister the ability to dissolve the board if he or she feels fit.

Let me give you an example. About four years ago, maybe a little bit longer, we were in a crisis, as normally is the case on the James Bay. Children were committing suicide or attempting suicide. It was another one of those rashes about five or six years ago. So myself and the Grand Chief, Stan Louttit, along with the community chiefs from Winisk down to Moosonee—or Peawanuck down to Moosonee and Moose Factory—we worked at putting together a response. One of the responses was to support Payukotayno, to give them the staff to be able to go in the communities and intervene with kids before they attempted suicide. So they were given—and pardon me, I may be wrong on the number; I stand to be corrected, but I know I'm close—\$2.4 million in order to shore up services in those communities to be able to do what needed to be done to work with those kids. It had a positive effect. We saw the suicide attempts in those communities come down.

The government, in its haste to save money some years later—the same government that gave them the \$2.4 million—took the money back. Guess what? We had another crisis—what was it, last winter?—where we had kids from not just Attawapiskat, but from across all kinds of communities along the James Bay and other communities in the north, having similar problems as we had some four or five years before. We're now saying that if that board, the Payukotayno board, says, "No, we're not taking this; we're not accepting that you're reducing our budgets by \$2.4 million," and decides to take some political action against the government of the day, the minister has the right to fire the board.

Their job is to represent the community. In this particular case, when it comes to children's aid societies on reserves, what drives those boards and what drives the community is very different than what happens in our urban communities. You can't compare the children's aid service that is in Kitchener-Waterloo to the children's aid services being given on the James Bay; it's apples and oranges. It's just totally different. Those boards and those workers and those chiefs in those communities are driven by a whole different set of values. The functionality in those communities is very different than what we see in Timmins, Waterloo, Kirkland Lake or Cobalt. So we need to take that into consequence when making decisions around what a board does.

Do boards, at times, make political decisions? Absolutely. But we live in a democracy, my friends. For us to say, as legislators, that we're going to delegate the authority from this Legislature and from cabinet—the ability to be able to fire boards. We're going to say to the minister, “If you, Minister”—he or she—“are unhappy with Payukotayno, Kunuwanimano or anything any other children's aid society in this province is doing, you have the right to fire the board.” Come on. Really? Do we really want to do that, as legislators?

This bill has got to go to committee. There's a lot of good in this bill. I want to say that because people may think I'm being critical of the entire bill—absolutely not. There is some stuff in this bill that is super important and has to be done. That's why this bill, yes, will go to committee. We'll vote for it to go to committee, because I think it's important for people to be able to have their say. But we're going to have to look at these issues, and we're going to have to say, “Is it wise to give the minister this much power?”

I urge the government—I'm not wrapping up here, Speaker; I've still got nine minutes and 23 seconds. But I urge the government to travel this bill. This bill should travel to the different regions of this province in an intersession; I would argue this summer. You don't have to pass this bill tomorrow. Allow the bill, in the intersession, to travel to some communities so that we can get some feedback.

Imagine what this Legislature could learn and what the members on the committee and the minister and his and her staff could learn if we went to Attawapiskat, if we went to Sioux Lookout and if we went to Cornwall and we listened to what people had to say. “You know what? In the real world, on the real ground, this is what it means to me.” If we were to amend the legislation so that it becomes a working document that is clear in what its intentions are and is clear about who has the power to do what, why should we be afraid of that as legislators? Why should the government be afraid of that? Doesn't that just strengthen the process?

So I have a huge problem with what the government has put in this bill when it comes to the ability of the minister to be able to fire a board. I think that's a real problem. Yes, at times, boards may disagree with the government of the day, and it could be of any stripe, but they are also there to represent.

Now, there's a whole other debate there, which we're not going to be able to deal with in this bill. It's how we appoint boards. The unfortunate reality of most of these agencies is that the person who runs the organization, under their own bylaws, goes and appoints people that he or she wants, and controls what they want as far as outcome, in the end, on the board. I know that's the case with the mental health association and other groups that I've dealt with. That's an issue. Maybe we need a bill in this House that democratizes these boards in some way and clearly defines what the roles are and what we expect of them. Should there be some sort of a clear, transparent election process within the organization to appoint people to the board? Should the municipal government and the provincial government, as the funder, have the ability to appoint people to the board so that the provincial interest be covered? Those are all legitimate questions for another debate at another time. But my point is that to give the minister the ability to fire a board, I think, is dangerous.

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The other one I want to warn you about, because we've gone through this before, is the powers of amalgamation under this bill. As a Legislature, again, we are delegating our authority off to the cabinet of Ontario and to the minister—in this case, it's not even the cabinet; it's the minister—to amalgamate boards.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Unprecedented.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, we've amalgamated before. That's not my argument. But I've got to tell you, bigger is not better—and I know the learned Mr. Potts will have lots to say about this.

Interjection: He always does.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: As he always does, and I'm sure it's going to be very well thought through and he's going to give us great comment on this.

But my point is that merging boards and making them bigger is not necessarily better. I will tell you, I've gone through it with school boards in northern Ontario with my friend John Vanthof from Timiskaming-Cochrane, where we used to have smaller school boards. We have now gone to school boards that go from Moosonee to North Bay. Imagine when you're the parent and say, “Hey, my bus is not picking up my kid.” How do you deal with those issues? Or, “My teacher's aide is not doing what needs to be done for little Johnny or little Mary.”

When you have large boards, they get further away from the people and they don't necessarily do a better job of delivering services to people. We say, “Oh, but it's more efficient. We save so much money.” I'll tell you what it's efficient at: boosting the salaries of the big managers. We end up creating more top management jobs, we end up making more bureaucracy on the top—and I'm a New Democrat saying that—and we end up paying people more money because, “Oh, I've got a bigger budget now, so I'm more important. I've got to be paid over \$200,000 to do my job. I'm important for our community.” Amalgamation is not all of the answer.

The other point is that the powers of amalgamation under this act also give the ability for the minister to amalgamate different types of boards. I didn't see it excluded anywhere, so I may stand corrected here. But here's the point: We have, for example, boards that serve francophone communities, like I have in my riding, right? It used to be, until this government came along—you had Jeanne Sauvé that did their thing and we had us who did our stuff in Timmins with the children's aid society of Timmins or Porcupine—whatever we called ourselves.

They went through a process of amalgamation and what ended up happening is that we lost—it's still a bilingual organization. I'm not going to tell people there's no respect toward trying to provide services to the francophone community. But I'll tell you what it did: The language of administration is no longer French, which I think is important in that case.

I'll take it one step further. What would prevent the government under a future minister to say, "I'll amalgamate Payukotayno, which primarily takes care of kids on-reserve, with Kunuwanimano, which deal with kids off-reserve"? It's a totally different environment, and there are some good reasons why we have those things separated out. What prevents the government in the future saying, "Oh, we'll just merge them together. They're all First Nations; they'll be fine with that"? Or maybe they decide that they want to amalgamate one or some of those boards with another, non-native board? That could happen in the future, under this act.

I think that the government has not been wise—they've done some good things in the bill, I want to say again. Moving the protection age from 16 to 18: I think it's a great idea. It should have been done a long time ago.

But I've only got 20 minutes on this bill and I want to point out what troubles me, and what troubles me is that this House, by way of the bill that's put forward by the current minister, is asking us to dissolve—not to dissolve, excuse me—to delegate our authority, as legislators, to him and cabinet on all future matters dealing with the issues in that bill.

I think that's a bad idea. I think, when we do that, we are stepping back in time. We're going back to a day where, instead of a king or a queen having all the decisions to do what they want, having the person who sits in the Premier's office decide who they want. Ultimate power in anybody's hands is not a good thing. I think the good system of democracy utilizes its Legislature. We are here in order to pass bills, but we're not here to dissolve our responsibility as legislators to the hands of the minister.

I just want to end on this point, and that is, the time that bills stay in the House and the time that bills go into committee. I spoke to this just a few seconds ago. But I think it's a huge disservice to the people we serve when the government decides that a bill like this, after six and a half hours, should be passed or time-allocated at the very least, and that the bill goes into committee here in

Toronto, not in communities across Ontario, for a couple of days. Bills like this typically get two or three days in Toronto, and if you want to speak to it, you've got to get to Toronto to be able to see it and speak to it.

How about I propose we have all legislation heard in Moose Factory, Ontario, and we'll see how the rest of this province feels.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Oldest settlement.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's a good point; the oldest settlement in Ontario, 1676, I think it was—maybe 1678.

But my point is that we wouldn't feel right with that because it would be expensive for all of us to travel to Moose Factory, Ontario, to be able to depute at a committee. Then, why are we doing it to the people of Moose Factory and other places across this province and not allowing our committees to travel? When I was first elected here in 1990, committees used to travel as a matter of course. A bill came to the House—sometimes it didn't spend very long in the House. There would be an agreement amongst the House leaders to say, "All right. Let's refer the bill"—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The learned Arthur Potts we'll hear from later.

My point is that the House leaders would make a deal and say, "Okay. We'll have a short time in the House in exchange for more time in committee and for it to travel a total of 10 or 15 days in whatever communities." We built and we made stronger legislation doing that because the people who were affected or the people came to see us—not just the paid lobbyists you get in Toronto. It was the average person who interacted with the service in the bill who came to talk to us and to give us advice.

I would give the government strong warning that they'd be better to have this bill travel at least for two or three weeks across Ontario before they ever pass this thing because there is good stuff in this bill, but there's a lot of problematic points as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Question and comments?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm so delighted to get all these approbations from the member opposite. "The learned," I think he called me. I won't disagree with him on that one occasion, Speaker. I may have lots of other reasons to disagree with him.

I want to start by saying how incredibly proud I am to be serving with the Minister of Children and Youth Services, who brought forward this bill.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Coteau, Coteau.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Coteau, Coteau. We could make that a chant if you wanted. Why would you interrupt me? I don't know.

But the point is, he's brought an incredible bill, having canvassed across the province of Ontario and met with First Nations leaders, indigenous people, children's aid societies—Catholic and public—all across this province to frame a bill which will put children first, put youth first. It's a youth-centred bill, and we're delighted about it.

What I hear from the member is he's creating what I would call "improbable hypotheticals," where he says, "Well, you know, what if the minister should direct that one indigenous community on-reserve be amalgamated?" That's not going to happen. The only way you're going to see amalgamations is if it's in the public interest, and the public interest is foremost in our minds going forward. You need to have that regulatory flexibility in order to be nimble. That's what this bill does, it gives us that regulatory flexibility.

We have travelled this bill—notwithstanding what the member has said—in consultations prior to bringing it forward. I've heard the members opposite complain, "It's such a thick bill. It's so many pages. It's so full of legalese. We can't even understand it." So they want to travel that document all over the province of Ontario, thinking they're going to get useful comment? It's not going to happen.

That's the point. All the amalgamations thus far have been voluntary, and there are no decisions about new amalgamations to this point. It's all about being in the public interest. When I hear the member opposite stand up and object to things that are in the public interest, I have concerns.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Questions and comments? The member from Lennox-Frontenac-Addington—close enough.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Close enough. Thank you, Speaker.

It was a pleasure listening to the member from Timmins-James Bay illustrate some of the failings of this bill.

I also have to make mention that it's very disappointing and disturbing to hear the member from Beaches-East York make light of the seriousness and the responsibilities we must discharge in this House. These bills are important, and how they impact people is important. To make light of valid concerns—concerns that have merit—and to interject nonsense into the debate does not serve anybody well.

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The member from Timmins-James Bay mentioned much about the unprecedented ministerial authority that this bill provides to amalgamate, close up and realign children's aid societies without the responsibility to bring it back to the House and have that decision safeguarded through debate in the House; the same with the minister's undue authority to appoint members to a local board. These are unprecedented actions. They are not warranted. Nowhere has there been any indication that there is a need for this all-encompassing authority to be vested only in the minister without this House having an opportunity to scrutinize these actions.

I do hope the minister has somebody address these. These are valid concerns. I don't think the minister wants to abrogate the function of the House by vesting all the authority about children's aid societies into his ministry. I'm sure that that's not his intention, but that's what the bill does provide.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Following the comments made by my colleague from Timmins-James Bay—he talked about the bill. It's one thing to have a bill in front of us, but it's also time, I think, to thank the thousands of people who work in children's aid agencies and societies across this great province.

I want to single out one person for this debate, and that's Bill Bevan from Windsor. He's been at it for the last 20 years. He's been the CEO of the Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society. A local kid, he got his BA and his MA in social work from the University of Windsor. For 40 years he's been working in this field, not always in Windsor. He went where the work was: St. Thomas; London; Grande Prairie, Alberta; back to Newmarket; Owen Sound; Thunder Bay; and then to Windsor again.

For the past 20 years, he's seen the expansion in our children's aid society because of the demand. When he got there, the budget was \$13.5 million; today's budget is \$60 million. I think the staff when he got there was something like 120; now it's 400 because of the demand.

He saw the beautiful expansion on Riverside Drive, across from Wiser's distillery, of their new building—a place where people come to work and they're proud to be there—and the Bill and Dot Muzzatti Child and Family Centre. And there is also something in Leamington.

Speaker, just one quick quote from a Windsor Star story on his retirement next month: "It has been the privilege of a lifetime to lead a team who have a passion for assuring the safety and protection of our community's most valuable resource, our children."

So thank you to Bill Bevan. Thank you to everyone who works in the children's aid societies across this province. It's one thing to have 270 pages, but it's another thing to have the people out there in our communities working on behalf of our children who need it the most.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd be happy to respond to some of the comments that were made earlier. But I want to start by saying that this bill is really about better positioning our child welfare, child protection agencies across the province of Ontario so that they can be successful. I've heard from, I believe, both critics, saying that they're going to support this bill. I hope that all members in the Legislature support this bill.

Yes, we can go through it. I heard there were comments around word-tweaking and these little tiny pieces—it's a comprehensive document. The committee process is set up in a way where people can come in and provide those types of comments. We've done consultations right across this province. We've talked to indigenous communities and we've talked to different child protection agencies.

I just want to get something on the record here in regard to a comment that was made around amalgamation. We have child protection agencies that, on their own, have come together to look for better ways to

position themselves for success. We have no intention of merging indigenous groups and taking the authority away from them.

What we're doing is setting up child protection agencies for success. We're doing this in many different ways. I don't think there is one person in this room who wouldn't say, "We need to make sure that the programs we put in place are culturally sensitive to the needs of different communities." I don't think there is one person in this room who wouldn't say, "Raising the age of protection to 18 is something that we need to be doing."

Mr. Speaker, as the minister responsible for this file, it's my job to make sure that our child protection agencies are set up for success in the future. I hope that all members in this Legislature support this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. We return to the member for Timmins—James Bay for his response.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank everybody for taking time to comment, but I really want to thank—and my special thanks goes to—the learned Arthur Potts who, again, gave us his wisdom. I think the government should allow him to speak on every bill at length, and I agree that we should actually give him more time, because every time he speaks, I find it quite interesting.

He essentially argued that one of the reasons that the bill shouldn't travel is because the bill has 300 pages and is too complicated. And if members of the assembly can't understand it, how do you expect the public to understand it? Wow, where did that come from?

I've got to say that this Legislature is here for a reason. We give a tertiary debate at second reading; the real work should be done in committee. It's not about doing work just in Toronto. I want to let you guys know that there is a world outside of Toronto. There are communities all across the north, east, west and the south, parts of this province that would like to be able to comment on this.

But the government's response, by way of both the learned Arthur Potts and the minister, is, "Don't worry. The minister went out and consulted." These are the same people who mucked up my hydro bill. I'm going to trust them to consult? These are the same people who took away the Ontario Northland train. These are the people who made a host of decisions that most of this province is upset over.

This Legislature has a responsibility. Our responsibility as legislators is to point out what we feel about the bill at second reading, but more importantly, to engage with the public, to consult with them across this province—not just the city of Toronto—so that they can have a say about what the end product is, so that we can all feel better and be better served by the legislation that is passed in this House. You're not going to do that if you continue through this process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the House to remember that we're having a civilized debate this afternoon, and we're hoping to get through

the afternoon ensuring that the Speaker can hear all the members who have the floor.

Again, I remind members that we refer to each other by our riding name or ministerial name, but not by our surnames.

Further debate.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I support this bill. I may have a deeper or closer connection than most of the people in this Legislature, the reason being that, at 18 months, I was—

Interjection.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Oh, sorry. I'm sharing my time with the MPP for Etobicoke North, the MPP for St. Catharines and the Minister of Transportation.

I have a closer contact with the children's aid society because, at 18 months of age, I was adopted. My adoptive parents contacted the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic Children's Aid Society. Back then, the only consideration that was given for adoption was your religion, so I had to be adopted into a Catholic family. The good news is that I had a wonderful life and the most wonderful parents anyone could have. I thank my biological mother for doing the right thing and giving me up. Since then, I've had a half-sister find me. Her experience was not as good as mine, but we both ended up being strong women, professional women, and for me it was a great experience.

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This government is committed to doing everything we possibly can so that children are given the best start in life. The Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2016, will provide a modern child- and youth-centred legislative framework. The last time this was done, there were many considerations that were not taken into account and that now will be. The proposed legislation puts children and youth at the centre of our services so that they have opportunities to succeed and to reach their full potential.

The Canadian Federation of University Women, Barrie chapter, are very interested in this bill. They are extremely supportive of it, and are especially pleased that we are increasing the age of protection to include all 16- and 17-year-olds. As was stated earlier, back when the bill was first made, 16- and 17-year-olds were almost considered adults and on their own. They could quit school. Nowadays, 16- and 17-year-olds still need to be in a loving, caring environment where someone watches out for them. I think this is one of the most important parts of this bill that's going forward.

It affirms the rights of children and it acknowledges the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

It builds on the goals of Katelynn's Principle, which the member from Hamilton Mountain discussed, by clearly stating that every child needs to be heard and respected, and placed at the centre of all decision-making.

It recognizes the importance of diversity and inclusion and the need to continue to address systemic racism. We know, and we've seen very clearly in the news lately, that this is a problem even in Canada, unfortunately.

This bill sets clear expectations for service providers as to how they should work with children, youth and family.

The other important part of this act, if passed, is that it would strengthen the child welfare and child and family services system by strengthening the ministry's ability to hold children's aid societies accountable for the services that they provide. It would strengthen the ministry's ability to hold CASs accountable for the management of public funds, and it would support First Nations, Métis and Inuit children, youth and families through the delivery of culturally appropriate supports that respect indigenous cultures, heritages and traditions.

I heard one of the other members talk about the fact that we might fire all of the board members. Very clearly, the legislation would give the minister the authority to appoint or replace a minority—a minority—of board members, not the whole board, including the chair, and to appoint a supervisor to temporarily operate and manage a society, if it's deemed necessary. We do this in other areas. When I was with education, it was done three times to school boards. There was good reason for it; it was not done lightly.

We are committed to ensuring that Ontario's children's aid societies remain first and foremost accountable to the public.

I thank you very much and I urge you to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I, of course, support wholeheartedly Bill 89, the Child, Youth and Family Services Act. I would also like to commend the foregoing speaker, the honourable MPP from Barrie, for sharing with us her own remarkable story and trajectory as someone who benefited from the children's aid society for adoption through her particular society in the area that it was and, of course, for her now serving and giving back to the community that she came from.

Speaker, there are a number of things, as you know, in this very elaborate bill with regard to the protection and the positioning of our own agencies to better serve children. The honourable MPP from Barrie made reference to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It's actually a very impressive and elegant document. Despite being printed in size 2.5 font, I would like to read from it for a moment:

"Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world ...

"Recognizing that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding...."

How do we actually empower and equip and fund agencies to do precisely that? Well, there are, of course, a number of different items. One is, as has been mentioned, we'll be raising the age of protection to include, to capture, to bring into the catchment area children who are 16 and 17 years old. We estimate that that will capture an extra, perhaps, 1,500 to 2,000 children.

The other thing, of course, is there are a number of issues, whether it's accountability or privacy or the child protection network. There are many tens of millions of records which we in the government are stewards of.

I wanted to speak not merely as a parliamentarian, but also as a physician, because I am hopeful and also gratified to know that there are a number of strategies involving mental health services. Within the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, there's essentially, I guess you could say, empowering or enabling legislation that will help a number of the agencies—there are about 30-plus; 31 of them have already been established—to help children who are suffering from mental health issues. As a doctor, I wanted to use this opportunity to say, if you do know of individuals who suffer from, as we call them, mood disorders or mental health problems or mental health issues, whether it's anxiety or depression or PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder, there are a number of symptoms. Folks who are suffering from these types of disorders will complain of things like a lack of sleep or non-restful sleep; losing interest in things; enhanced guilt; poor energy; inability to concentrate; loss of appetite; what we call psychomotor agitation, which is perhaps a polite way of saying wanting to smash your fist into a wall; and unfortunately, even things like suicidal thoughts. All of these, of course, are very real in our society. Individuals who are suffering from family separation, family breakdown, toxic divorces and so on are particularly prone. The other thing to note is that a family suffering divorce at any age—meaning the kids or the family members—is somewhat traumatic. If it catches children at a particularly youthful age—for example, if they're eight, nine, 10, 12, 15 years of age—that really goes to their inner core. It kind of affects their soul and can actually lead to lifelong consequences.

I'm very pleased that this particular bill, Bill 89, will help to address and, as I said earlier, empower some of our 30-plus agencies to address this type of issue—mental health disorders, anxiety disorders, bullying and so on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for St. Catharines.

Mr. James J. Bradley: One of the attributes I look toward in any bill is, how do independent people view it? Those of us in the House tend to view things in a partisan nature. The government will promote the government bill; the opposition will be suitably critical when they deem it to be appropriate. But I look at what some others have had to say about the introduction this bill, and I think I should share this with members of the assembly.

I'm looking at what Bruce Rivers, executive director of Covenant House Toronto, had to say. Covenant House has done an outstanding job with young people who find themselves without a home in many cases. They've been intervening on their behalf over the years. Bruce Rivers says the following: "We welcome the positive changes the province has announced today to modernize Ontario's child and youth service system. This is an important step forward to improve outcomes for vulnerable youth. In

particular, increasing the age of protection to 18 will make a profound difference for vulnerable youth by giving them access to more services and supports.”

That is a very critical age that we’re looking at. To see that extended now to 18 I think is a very significant step forward.

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Also, I looked at what Mary Ballantyne, CEO of the Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies, had to say. Ms. Ballantyne said the following:

“We welcome the opportunity to work closely with our partners in government and across the sector to continue to advise on the implementation of this new legislation and these reforms to the child welfare system. This legislation will allow for stronger services, improved outcomes and place an emphasis on prevention. We are particularly pleased to see the age of protection raised to 18, and we are delighted by the ministry’s continued support of the One Vision One Voice project to improve outcomes for African Canadian children and families who come into contact with the child welfare system.”

At this point in time, I should mention as well that those who have worked in the system over the years—the dedicated staff in children’s aid societies across our province—are deserving of the highest of praise, working as they do individually with the families and the individual children who come into their care.

In addition to that, those who volunteer to be on the board of directors of the children’s aid societies across the province have a genuine interest in the welfare of those children, and I want to commend them.

There’s another quote I have here that I think is significant, particularly as it relates to an individual group within the province. This is from Margaret Froh, president of the Métis Nation of Ontario:

“The Ontario government’s commitment to strengthening communities is important to improving outcomes for Métis children and families across this province. Child and family services in Ontario are in need of significant reform, including legislation that replaces offensive terminology with current and more appropriate language and ensures that Métis children, families and communities are recognized, respected and included along with other indigenous peoples. The Métis Nation of Ontario sees the new legislation as a step toward more effective, prevention-based approaches to improving outcomes for Métis children and youth, which is a shared interest of the MNO and the government of Ontario as set out in our MNO-Ontario Framework Agreement. We look forward to reviewing the bill and participating in the dialogue that will follow its introduction, and to developing a stronger partnership with the government of Ontario in the area of child and family services for the benefit of all Métis children and youth.”

I want to say lastly—because I want to leave some time for the Minister of Transportation—that it’s encouraging when we see that representatives of the three parties in the House are in fact in favour in principle of

this legislation. I think it’s a recognition that there’s a major challenge out there in terms of children in care, as we refer to them, and that this challenge requires some significant changes which are contained within this bill and which will be also affected by regulations which are promulgated to go with the bill. I think that’s exceedingly important.

I would say that this goes past partisan consideration. As a member of the government, naturally I’m pleased that our government has brought this forward, but when I’ve listened to debates over the years, I can see that members of all political parties represented in this House are genuinely concerned about the children who are affected by this—children being not just to 16 but to age 18.

I look forward to the potential passing of this bill, perhaps unanimously, by the House. Everyone will make that choice, ultimately. Of course, the committee deliberations are always significant because they allow the public to have input. They may be individual groups within the public or the public at large. It also allows for the opportunity at least to present some amendments which may strengthen the bill.

I now yield the floor to my friend the Minister of Transportation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: As my colleagues have already mentioned so far in debate this afternoon on Bill 89, I, like them, am very honoured to have the chance to lend my voice to the debate this afternoon here in the chamber.

I think it goes without saying—I know the member from St. Catharines has said it in his remarks. As a member of the government and as someone who has had the chance to consider this legislation, I am very supportive of Bill 89. I believe it should move forward.

As the member from St. Catharines also mentioned, we will look forward to the balance of discussion and debate here today and in the coming days and weeks and to the incredibly important work that will take place at committee. Hopefully this legislation will come back and receive, as he mentioned, unanimous consent from all members in the House.

I should also point out, second of all, having listened to the member from Etobicoke North—who spoke both as an individual parliamentarian or legislator but also as a medical doctor—that he spoke very eloquently about the impacts of this legislation as proposed on what he perceives to be some of the challenges inherent in the issues that are being wrestled with in this bill.

He also mentioned the member from Barrie, who spoke first in this particular segment of debate and shared a very personal part of her life journey, a very personal part of her story, with all members in the Legislature and how the particular perspective that she brought to bear from her personal perspective impacts how she perceives this particular legislation. I think her remarks were particularly moving and particularly telling with respect

to demonstrating that Bill 89 is striking the right balance as it relates to moving forward with a number of measures that I know many on all sides of the House have talked about, as it relates to child, youth and family services through the years.

Listening to the debate, whether it is members on the governing side or members from the opposition benches, Speaker, I think one watching or perhaps reading Hansard later on would understand why it is so critically important for us to move forward with this legislation. Obviously, this is a bill that elicits a great deal of interest and a great deal of passionate discussion and debate. There are other bills, private members' bills, that have been brought forward to this House on many of the topics that are addressed by this bill, if not all of the topics addressed by this bill. Again, I think it's actually a tribute to all members in this House, covering all three caucuses, that there is such interest and such passion.

There are a number of initiatives, or a number of pieces or aspects to this legislation, much of which have been discussed this afternoon, such as when we're talking about increasing the age of protection to include all 16- and 17-year-olds, as the member from St. Catharines mentioned when he was providing that third-party validation for the direction that Bill 89 is proposing to take.

Also, this legislation affirms the rights of children and acknowledges the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Certainly we heard some discussion about that a little bit earlier today. It builds on the goals of Katelynn's Principle by clearly stating that every child needs to be heard and respected and placed at the centre of all decision-making. It recognizes the importance of diversity and inclusion and the need to continue to address systemic racism, and it sets clear expectations for service providers with respect to how they should work with children, youth and families.

There are a number of other elements contained in this legislation. I could spend some time this afternoon going through or elaborating on some of what I just referenced, but I really think, with my remaining time, I would say, again, having listened to the discussion, the debate that has come forward from all members in this House, it is clear to me that through the rest of the legislative process, certainly as this bill hopefully makes its way to committee, I fully expect that there will be significant interest, and understandably so, on the part of the public for them to play their role and to make a meaningful contribution to the discussion and debate.

I would also say that I had the chance earlier today to hear, in the course of the debate in response to some of the previous debate, the minister responsible for children and youth, who stood in this place and spoke. He is a colleague that I have known for some time, and the level of passion, the level of interest and energy and enthusiasm that he has brought to the debate, but also to the formulation and the creation of Bill 89 and all of its very complicated aspects, is something that I believe needs to be noted. It needs to be acknowledged and,

frankly, I would say, on behalf of my constituents, I thank that minister and his entire team and his ministry for the incredible work that they have brought to bear on Bill 89. I hope all members will join with us and support this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I would like to start off by saying I would share very seriously the concerns of a previous speaker, the member from Timmins—James Bay, when he talked about how much authority is given to the minister by this bill and how concerned he is about that and how it is a removal of democracy. I share those concerns very strongly. I noticed the same points as I was reading through my bill briefing here. It talks about giving him the right to remove and appoint directors to boards, to amalgamate directors, to appoint a supervisor who can make all kinds of orders and demands on children's aid societies and enter without a warrant or notice. That would be a terrible thing to allow to happen. Even police in this province cannot enter property without a warrant or a notice, and if there is a serious risk of a problem, a warrant can be obtained. So I don't think we should allow that law to change, or that tendency or respect for the law, or the respect for freedom and democracy. This has a tendency to go too far—it does go too far.

1640

I applaud the idea of including 16- and 17-year-olds. Of course, that's a good idea because that's been much needed for a long time.

There is another area, which I'll touch on briefly, that speaks about the autonomy of families, integrity of families, strength of families—families are a mother, a father and children. Fathers have come to my office and complained, at times, when there's been divorces and the children's aid society gets involved, about how they are treated, and how they are not treated fairly and not treated equally. There is an opportunity with this legislation to look after that bit of business, which is a very serious matter. There's a group in Ontario called the Canadian Association for Equality, which fights for men's rights, and that group should be listened to and should come to our committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I want to rise and talk about Bill 89. But I would like to say to some of the comments that were made by my colleagues around staff at children's aid societies, who do incredible work—it's very hard work, very stressful work, and they do an incredible job, as well as the board members, who may volunteer, and the volunteers.

But I think what we have to look at is how stressful this is on the kids. A lot of them who have come into our office actually blame themselves for some of the problems at home, and it affects their schooling. You talk about education: When they're going through a tough time, you see their marks start to fall, you see them quit

their sports teams, and then you end up seeing how stressed they become. If we take a look at what's going on today in the province of Ontario with young people—we see it even in Niagara, as MPP Bradley will attest to, where young people are committing suicide in record numbers in Niagara.

The other part, which the bill doesn't touch on as much as I'd like—and I'm glad the minister is here; maybe he can hear this. When we have split-ups, a lot of times the grandparents are affected by that. You take a look at my colleague Mike Mantha, who brought forward a grandparent bill, a private member's bill; before that, it happened to be a Liberal, Kim Craitor, who brought it forward a number of years ago and it was never passed. But it has been passed by this House, and it should have passed by this House.

One of the concerns I have is that the grandparent sometimes is the parent. The way the marriage has split up, they end up living with the grandparents. It's important for the minister to hear this, because the grandparent bill should be incorporated into the bill as well, grandparents sometimes being the parents. So I'd appreciate you considering that as well.

Thank you very much for my time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Coteau: It's an honour, again, to speak in regard to this bill, Bill 89. I just want to go through a couple of the reasons why I think this bill is important, and why, as a Legislature and as MPPs, we need to move forward with this. This is a good piece of legislation that aims to accomplish some pretty incredible things.

I spoke about raising the age of protection. Can you imagine that there are 16- and 17-year-olds in this province who are not protected when it comes to needing those types of services? This bill will do that.

It affirms the rights of children and acknowledges the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Advocates from across the province, when we were going and consulting with people, spoke about this United Nations piece and how it was important that it be part of the bill.

I would say that one of the most important things in regard to this bill is Katelynn's Principle and putting the child at the centre of decision-making. I think it's pretty astonishing—and I said this in my first comments when introducing the bill—that in this day and age, we actually have to, in legislation, talk about putting a child at the centre of decision-making. A child should always be part of all decisions we make. In fact, I would say that we are all, somewhat, the minister responsible for children or the MPP responsible for children—this is a shared responsibility for all of us. I know that this bill does exactly that.

We can't afford to have a young person in this province be neglected, to not be cared for and to not feel protection and love from their community and from people around them. This bill will set a new tone throughout the province to ensure that young people are

protected and feel protected here in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I rise again to make comments on this bill. I heard the minister say that they have been all around the province to consult on this bill. I don't know what "all around the province" means, because if he was in my riding, I don't know that—whether he was in my riding to consult with anybody there. If he was, thank you very much, but I don't think he was. So to say that you've been all around the ridings doing this is a bit of a stretch, I would say, or maybe a stretch goal—I guess I could say that.

Certainly, those of us in our caucus see that there are some good things about the bill. Raising the age of children protected is something that is a good point. We need to address that, and this bill does address that.

The point has been raised about ministerial responsibility with this bill. We have seen, in other pieces of legislation—and other ministers give directives to their ministry and change things which we don't even know about until it comes to pass and comes to be. That's something that has been brought up here a couple of times, that there is a danger in that.

Bills, especially bills such as this, should be debated in the House, and points of the bill should be talked about in the House, and a lot of times we're not even told about it until it happens. There is a danger in that, when you give ministers more responsibility than what they had in previous legislation. So I hope the minister would listen to these comments, and when this bill goes to committee, that it is brought up, and they do listen to it carefully and take our comments with seriousness.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One of the government members can reply. I recognize the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I think everyone on this side of the House, including the minister, listened very closely to the comments made by the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills and the member from Niagara Falls. Certainly, the minister himself, in his remarks—I think everyone here and everyone watching would have heard the extensive knowledge and the extensive interest and passion that that minister brings to this particular legislation—and the final comments that were provided by the member from Perth-Wellington.

I think that what we've heard in response to this last segment of debate only reinforces what I and others have said throughout the course of debate. There is a significant interest in making sure that we get this legislation right. I know that the minister and his team and everybody on this side of the House understand that. But by the same token, all of the key elements that are contained in Bill 89 are elements that deserve to go forward, deserve to receive approval because of the need to make sure that the gaps that are currently in existence within the system are filled and that ultimately, as the minister said, we move forward with a regime or with changes to

the existing circumstances that, again, keep the child at the centre of attention, at the centre of all decision-making.

The minister did point out the ironic situation whereby it's a requirement to actually enshrine that in the legislation. Notwithstanding that, this legislation does move forward in that regard. That is why I said earlier in debate that I sincerely hope that all members, understanding that it still needs to go through the process, understanding there will be a ton of interest, I'm sure, when it goes to committee—if it should go to committee. When it goes to committee for additional discussion and analysis, I'm sure there will be a ton of interest from people outside of this building who understand that the impacts here are far-reaching but they're necessary. That is very clearly articulated in all of the discussion and debate we're having here this afternoon. I hope, again, that members will see their way to supporting Bill 89.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

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Mr. Bill Walker: I'm privileged to speak to this bill today. I had originally made some comment in regard to one of the former speakers, and I inadvertently wanted to make sure that I acknowledged Don Moore. Don is the current chair of Bruce Grey family services. I had mentioned Gary Harron, who was the chair of Bruce Grey family services—children's aid, back in the day, when they amalgamated. I wanted to make sure that I acknowledged Don and all of his efforts.

I want to just start off, before my remarks, by saying that the premise of this is—and my colleague from Haldimand–Norfolk, I believe, said the same thing in part of his remarks—“There is no room for error.” We have to get this right. It's about our children and their welfare, and the first—and every—priority has to be the programs and services that put their welfare first.

I want to acknowledge the staff and the volunteers across Ontario who have served our children's aids or our children's services programs, particularly those volunteer board members, as well as paid staff, who are entrusted to ensure the safety and the welfare of our children in these times of need.

I want to acknowledge the former critic, Sylvia Jones, the member from Dufferin–Caledon, who has represented children's services for a long time as critic and has long awaited this piece of legislation.

Bill 89, Supporting Children, Youth and Families Act, 2016, proposes to replace the Child and Family Services Act, the CFSA. The CFSA is a 32-year-old piece of legislation.

I was also a critic, a couple of years ago, of children and family services. It was clear to me that it was time and that there were a lot of challenges that needed to be reviewed. I think that's the whole intent of us as legislators: to review and make sure that we have the best, most concise piece of legislation, removing ambiguity and ensuring, again, as I said in my opening statement, that the welfare of children is absolutely the most critical thing that we debate in this House.

The simple and tragic reasons for why we need to reform the child welfare system are broken down clearly in the Katelynn Sampson and Jeffrey Baldwin coroner's inquests.

The shocking and tragic death of Katelynn in 2008 drives home to me why we need to get this legislation right, and that details matter. The coroner's inquest into the death of Katelynn Sampson provided 54 recommendations to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services alone, and 173 recommendations in total.

The simple number of recommendations from the inquest should indicate how much work there is to be done. For too long, there have been serious deficiencies in the system, which have let our most vulnerable slip through the cracks. The knowledge that we need to do better grounds my support of this bill.

We certainly need to protect children from death or bodily harm. We also have to consider the outcomes for children, their families and their communities.

A common concern I hear regarding children who have engaged with the child welfare system is the quality of their lives during the time, and after, they enter child protection, mental health services or other services that the Ministry of Children and Youth Services provides.

According to the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, only 44% of former foster children graduate from high school, compared to 81% of the general population. Even more concerning, almost half of an estimated 8,000 Canadian youth experiencing homelessness this year lived in foster care or group homes.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to acknowledge—and you'll recall, I trust; you've been in this House during these periods—that the Progressive Conservative caucus, my colleagues, have had two separate private member's bills calling for the expansion of the age of protection to include 16- and 17-year-olds. The former Barrie MPP, a colleague and friend—my former seatmate, in fact—Rod Jackson's Bill 88 proposed allowing temporary care agreements to be made with children aged 16 and 17.

Mr. Jackson's advocacy on this issue put into the spotlight the troubling scenario of children aged 16 and 17 being turned away from service, and provided a straightforward solution which all three parties supported.

Mr. Jackson's advocacy on this issue led to him being presented with the annual Youth Legal Services Award. The award is given to an individual who has provided an outstanding contribution to the lives of street-involved youth, both by supporting the Street Youth Legal Services program and by acting as a motivator and leader in reducing youth homelessness.

While Bill 88 did not receive royal assent, his proposed legislation helped pave the way for the proposed legislation that we're discussing today, Bill 89.

My congratulations to Rod Jackson for his work and advocacy finally being adopted.

While private members' bills often get stuck in committee, despite having support from all three parties, hopefully, it will be adopted, if we get there.

Having support from all three parties, it's a victory when an individual's solution to a problem is put into legislation. Well done, Rod.

More recently, my colleague and friend the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Jim McDonnell, proposed similar legislation in Bill 32, the Right to Care Act, in 2016.

So this government has had two separate opportunities in the last four years to address what many saw as an obvious gap in child care. MPP Rod Jackson's Bill 88 was sent to third reading. I'll just say that four years ago, we could have done this. Hopefully, we're finally getting it done today, or certainly in the near future, once it goes to committee.

By creating a legislative mandate to protect these children, it is my hope that it will create another lever for the government to address the heinous crime of human trafficking.

Mr. Speaker, from Hansard on February 22, the comment was made, I believe, by either the parliamentary assistant or the minister: "We hope that through consultation with societies and communities, there will be voluntary restructuring to improve services to children, youth and their families." If the goal is to provide the child protection system in Ontario, then I believe that sentence needs a lot more meat on the bone. Please explain to me how making child protection agencies larger, how amalgamating them so that individual communities no longer have what will be volunteer CAS boards participating—when we take that away, how does that make child protection agencies and child protection in the province of Ontario better?

It really struck me when she said in her opening remarks, and I would love to have some clarification—Mr. Speaker, I alluded to very briefly in my earlier comments that we've had an amalgamation happen within Bruce and Grey counties to form one board. I think, speaking to the chairs and to the executive director, it was a very arduous, very challenging, very time-consuming and very laborious process, but they now have a construct that's working. It's efficient and truly is helping kids.

But to say, just because that one worked that another amalgamation that is forced or directed by a minister at any time doesn't necessarily mean that it's going to be a better system. Getting bigger sometimes could actually lead to large administrations, large bureaucracies and more money going to that administrative bureaucracy than it is to the care of the children.

One of the concerns that has been raised in here a lot today, although I may use different words, is a "thou shalt" in the province of Ontario, that no child protection agency can pass a budget that is going to be in a deficit. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, thou shalt look in the mirror and make sure that our budget—because in the five years I've been here, this government has not passed a single balanced budget. They are proclaiming they will in 2018, but I would suggest that they're actually going to do it with a lot of repercussions and negative impacts to the people of Ontario.

I heard one of the ministers earlier just this afternoon speaking about that 25% reduction in hydro rates. What they fail to leave out is what the increase in rates has been under the 14 years of this government. If you raise it 220% and give me 25% back, that isn't really being the hero. If you started the fire and you're burning the house—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Order. I'll remind all members that the debate has to be relevant to the bill. I would ask the member to bring his comments back to the provisions in the bill.

Mr. Bill Walker: It is relevant in this case, because when you don't balance a budget at the provincial level and you're spending \$11 billion in interest payments to service that debt that you've created, that's money that could be going to these boards. It could actually be providing services for children across this great province of ours, and those most in need, Mr. Speaker.

To suggest that you must amalgamate, with no rationale to what the ramifications will be to the actual children you're purporting to serve, in my perspective, is just not right. We have to look at those things.

Part of the legislation is about CPIN, the new computer system. Again, when I was in the family, children and youth services and the social and community services critic portfolios, this government introduced a program called SAMS. SAMS was a colossal nightmare. The people, again, at the front lines who needed that money were the people impacted time and again because they rammed through a piece of technology that wasn't well-developed. It wasn't ready to go to market, Mr. Speaker. I think the cost was about \$292 million, which was a direct impact. Then, there were a number of municipalities who actually covered all of the overtime because of that colossal nightmare, which again is either another tax to go back to that municipality or money that didn't go to many front-line services.

Mr. Speaker, I'm questioning, when they say they're going to implement these things, whether they've truly thought them through, they're truly ready to be implemented and they're actually going to serve the purposes they say.

I believe the Auditor General reported that eHealth is an \$8-billion nightmare we have nothing to show for. So when I hear things, like CPIN, for a new program, I want to make sure—because this government doesn't have a great track record when we talk about technology. EHealth is absolutely a nightmare.

We have the diabetes registry, which I think was over \$2 million, and still nothing to show for it.

Mr. Speaker, I raise these concerns, because as I started in my opening remarks, everything we do should be about front-line care and the children that we are given the privilege to create laws and regulations and legislation to serve them the best

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Interestingly, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child to include "every

human being below the age of 18.” Providing service to a child to age 15 does not make sense when we know that people ages 16 and 17 are not only children, but are also vulnerable to abuse by caregivers. We also know that the ages of 16 and 17 are particularly important for development and are times of great change for children. So it seems prudent to ensure that those children receive the same support as their younger peers.

I’m pleased to see this legislation addressing that. Again, I give kudos my colleagues, both Rod Jackson and Jim McDonell, for bringing this forward. It truly was a technicality. The child had no choice in being 16 or 17, but they didn’t meet this criteria and they didn’t meet that criteria. I truly hope that we won’t allow those children, just because of age, to slip through the cracks any longer.

Rather than another tragic example of a child not being recognized by the child welfare system as needing assistance, these instances are where service providers know of a child who needs help, but the current legislative system means that they cannot receive the help they need. The proposed legislation will address this discrepancy by requiring a children’s aid society to protect children ages 16 and 17.

One potential positive that this part of the legislation may bring is an added lever for the province of Ontario to combat human trafficking. Human trafficking is a heinous crime where victims, mostly women and children, are forced to provide labour or sexual services through coercion, all for the direct profit of their traffickers. Human trafficking affects children in every walk of life, but according to the RCMP’s 2013 report, Domestic Human Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation in Canada, individuals are most susceptible to traffickers when they need financial support or desire love and affection. The RCMP’s report also indicates that many victims are runaways from group homes or their primary caregiver’s residence. The ability for a children’s aid society to protect a child aged 16 or 17 at risk of or currently being trafficked is a positive element of this legislation.

Speaker, I’m sure you are aware of the great work of my colleague and yours the member of provincial Parliament for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, Laurie Scott, and her advocacy on the issue of human trafficking in Ontario. I want to commend her for all that she’s done to help out in this area. Ms. Scott truly led the charge for the select committee, recognizing the significance of the problem of human trafficking in Ontario and sharing some surprising and, sadly, shocking facts that many in the public might not be aware of. So if this can help in any way, we certainly want to do what we can to support that.

Another example of where the government has not taken action can be seen in the recent Auditor General’s report on child and youth mental health. The auditor found that, despite concerns being articulated in 2003 about the oversight of the child and youth mental health program, “the ministry still does not monitor and effectively administer this program to ensure that

children and youth in need of mental health services are provided with timely, appropriate and effective mental health services, and to ensure that mental health services are delivered efficiently.” This is on top of a 50% increase since 2008-09 in hospitalization for mental health programs.

I shared earlier in my comments that recently I had members from Parry Sound and Nipissing in who are currently on strike. One of their concerns is, is this truly just a cost-saving measure? Is this a case of a government who, again, has run deficit budgets the whole time I’ve been here and that has accumulated debt to a proportion of \$300 billion-plus? We’re getting close to 2018, to an election, when they profess that they’ll have balanced the budget. Is this yet another situation where they’re actually cutting money back, forcing agencies to cut back on services and programs for front-line children in need, so that they can achieve a short-term goal? I certainly hope that is not the case.

We need to ensure, as I said in my opening salvo and at every chance I’m here—I look at the pages every day here. They are our future; they are our youth. All youth need and deserve to have the programs and services when they need them. As a government, every government person in here should—and I believe everybody comes with the right intent, but some of the actions have taken away those front-line services by going down that debt road all the time. By accumulating that much debt, we are taking services from the front lines. We then have to turn around and say “no.”

Some of those problems actually exacerbate themselves, which ends up meaning more money gets spent on some of those ills because of theory. The Green Energy Act is a prime example: the billions and billions of dollars that we’re going to spend on the Green Energy Act, on the theory of stopping global warming. Yet what happens to all of the other programs because we’re spending so much money? I think \$133 billion is what that’s going to cost us over the life of the Green Energy Act.

What could we do with that for these kids that we’re talking about in children and youth services, in children’s aid societies? Just the \$11 billion we’ve spent on interest alone to service the debt payments each year—would we truly be having people coming through our doors, seeking help and seeking concern that they don’t have the programs and services today, if we actually had managed our finances better, if we hadn’t wasted so much money? When I say “we,” I’m actually reflecting the government on the opposite side, the Liberals, because it certainly hasn’t been my ability in here. I’ve voted against those budgets, because I’ve been very concerned that a precedent has been set. They continue to overspend, and that comes back every day in things like children’s aid societies and community and social services.

Another area of this legislation is the powers of the minister regarding the oversight and funding of service providers. A number of colleagues in here have talked about how a minister, at his or her directive, can actually

come in and usurp democracy by taking away, stripping away, the rights of people. That certainly is, fundamentally, something that we have to be very cautious of. At any time, as elected officials, we need to protect and enshrine democracy in our communities, in our province and in our country, and ensure that a minister, at any time, can't just come in, because they have a choice and want to do something—particularly if it's simplistic but hidden behind the scenes—and be able to force funds out of an agency.

I know that when I first was elected, colleagues from children's aid services in my backyard came in and very much addressed the concern that, as volunteer board members, they were actually financially liable if they went into deficit. What they were sharing with me was that more kids were needing programs and services, and the acuity of kids needing programs and services. They can't control that. They step up for these roles because they care about kids and they want to do the right thing. So to be limited by someone else's number that says, "You shall balance this budget," particularly for many years when they've either been frozen or, in some cases, decreased—it's very challenging for a board member to truly feel confident that they can fulfill the mandate of what they stepped up to agree about. So that is one thing.

Amalgamation, which I spoke to—it isn't necessarily always that bigger is better. Someone else, I believe, used those same terms today. In our case, in Bruce and Grey, it actually worked. It's more efficient. They've streamlined a lot of services, meaning that money went back to the kids, which is really what we should all be doing, and I'm pleased to see that. But just to come in as a minister's directive, to say, "You shall amalgamate," and looking at some of the larger areas they're looking at—I'll use the Ontario Trillium Foundation. They were looking at cutting back from 16 local areas that were being served across the province to five.

Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, it was rumoured, would be in a catchment area that would include Kingston. Mr. Speaker, that's not local. You can't actually have people that understand your unique community needs when you're serving from an area as far away from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound as Kingston.

In this case, that's my concern: How big would be amalgamations become? How much money would actually be spent on administration and bureaucracy as opposed to the actual children?

The other thing is, there needs to be clear and transparent processes. If a minister is going to come in and use those types of powers, everyone needs to understand exactly what the realities are. What's the clarity? Why are they doing it? What is the expectation? There needs to be community input.

Mr. Speaker, I can cite another example right now: school closures across this great province. Six hundred schools are scheduled to be closed by this Liberal government, yet they took out the community impact piece. They've taken out the ability for communities to truly consult and be there.

I have two situations in my own backyard—and I'm going to talk about those tomorrow—where the community is rallying and saying, "We have solutions. We just need the government to come to the table and give us the ability," because they're the ones saying, "We want to see collaboration and partnerships."

I want to ensure that this legislation goes forward, that it goes to committee and that we focus on the rights and needs of the children, and the wishes of the child. We need to ensure that the child has a voice in all of this: the right to be informed in language suitable to their understanding; the right to a plan of care within 30 days; the right to be heard in respect of decisions of treatment, education, training or work, creed, community, identity and cultural identity, and discharge from a residential placement or transfer. The simple act of talking with the child may save lives.

Actions must be taken to ensure that every filter we put any legislation through—in this case, very specific to children—is about what programs and services. Everything else has to be secondary to that.

It is my hope that there are some good pieces in this legislation, but it needs to get to committee. The government truly needs to stop and listen to all people, and have all of the right stakeholders in those rooms. It has taken 32 years to get here. We could have actually done it four years ago, in regard to the bill of my colleague Rod Jackson.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the government has listened today to this debate. I hope they'll take into consideration all of the points. At the end of the day, may we provide new legislation that truly puts children first.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's always a pleasure to follow my good friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. He's always so well-researched and well-spoken, and he's a very colourful member. Speaker, from here, 11 chairs away, I can see his orange sticky notes that highlight when he wanted to make good points. Do you know what? Orange, I must say, is one of my favourite colours.

The member spoke of the hard work that's put in by the staff at children's aid societies and the volunteer boards. I know, in our case, down my way, the wide, wide knowledge of the people who serve on the board, as volunteers, from labour, from business, from the community, and so hard-working—and a shout-out to them.

The member also talked about the welfare of children as being one of the most important things we discuss in this provincial Parliament, and truer words have never been spoken. We are here to help the most vulnerable, and in this case, we're dealing with our children.

He also talked about how, for too long, there had been serious deficiencies in the system. For 14 years, we've had a government that brings forth a great bill—270 pages—and it has taken them 14 years to get here. Still, I'll commend them. It's in front of us now, and we're going to deal with it.

Down my way, Speaker, we have the Windsor Residence for Young Men. We had three local service agencies looking after homeless young women. We now have a very successful program, the Windsor Residence for Young Men. The unfortunate part is that, while the residence for the women is funded by the province, not a penny goes to the Windsor Residence for Young Men. I think there's a serious problem with that. They are looking at the individuals who fall between the cracks and who need as much help as the women do.

Thank you for your time this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I do want to say that, categorically, there isn't one member of this House who can't say that this piece of legislation puts a great deal of respect for the culture, the heritage and the traditions of the First Nations, Inuit and Métis people. That is something that I do want to make a comment on. The member from Timmins-James Bay did make some comments about that, and I felt that it was necessary to bring that forward again.

We are in discussion about the amalgamations. We are not going to oblige or force any of the indigenous societies to do an amalgamation. They will be exempt from that piece of the legislation.

I also want to make sure that we focus on the customary care for indigenous people. I think it's extremely important, as well, to note that we have already designated nine indigenous CASSs, and we're also planning for more customary care for indigenous children and youth who are in need of protection.

The minister and myself and a team of people did go to northern Ontario and we did have an opportunity to meet with one of the First Nations groups that he mentioned, Kunuwanimano. We had some very good discussions about some of the challenges that they were facing.

Outside of that, there have been quite a number of consultations that were done. There were public engagement sessions between October and December of 2014, that were held in 11 different locations across the province, including Kingston, Timmins, Sudbury, Windsor, London, Hamilton, Thunder Bay, Scarborough, Brampton, Toronto and Ottawa.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to add a few comments to the debate this afternoon on this bill.

I commend my colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, who, in his dissertation, outlined a number of concerns, as well as things that we see as positive in this bill. At the end of the day, it's about the children and the staff who work with them and, of course, those families who also are affected by this.

I was doing some reading. It has been an interesting debate. I've been able to hear most of it. I think there are 37 different acts within the government that are affected by this legislation. A number of people have said it has

been 32 years since it has been updated, so obviously it needs a lot of updates.

Some of the recommendations in here are the results of coroner's inquiries: the last two the Katelynn and the Jeffrey Baldwin cases, but there have been many, many more, I know, in Ontario and across the country.

I know one of my colleagues, Laurie Scott from Haldimand-Norfolk—no, that's not it.

Mr. Bill Walker: Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Kawartha Lakes-Brock, sorry—had a bill called the Saving the Girl Next Door Act. Hopefully some of the issues that are addressed in here would resolve some of that.

We had Jim McDonnell, the member from Cornwall—no, Stormont-Dundas—

Mr. Bill Walker: South Glengarry.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I was going to say, "Sand and gravel," but that's not right.

Mr. Bill Walker: Sand, dust and gravel.

Mr. Robert Bailey: That's kind of an inside joke. Anyway, that member as well had a number of recommendations, and a private member's bill. He worked hard on this, as well as our member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

I look forward to the rest of the debate, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour for me to be able to make my first comments on Bill 89, the Supporting Children, Youth and Families Act. It's an incredibly important bill. I'm following the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. He brought up a lot of issues; he can put a lot of issues in a short time.

Close in my riding, we're also dealing with the lock-out of the Nipissing Parry Sound District Children's Aid Society. Having spoken to those people, their primary worry is the continuance of care for the families and the children that they deal with. I'd like to put that in the record again: The ministry has to put those two sides together so they come out with the best resolution for the children. That needs to be done.

Something else: The member from Kingston and the Islands took exception to something that the member of Timmins-James Bay said about consultation with First Nations. What the member from Timmins-James Bay—what I got out of that is that he felt there should be full consultation on the developed bill, between second and third reading, with Ontarians across the province, including First Nations. A few consultation sessions with the ministry before the bill is drafted is not the same thing.

For those of us who have been to funerals of children in First Nations reserve communities, there is no way that you can do enough consultation by stopping in 11 places before the bill is drafted. The last two I had to attend were in Wahgoshig. For this bill to be done correctly, we should go to Wahgoshig because those people have experience with what you need to do with First Nations communities and the troubles they face.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. We return to the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for his response.

Mr. Bill Walker: I thank all the people that spoke. My colleague and friend from Windsor–Tecumseh I think really summed it up very simply: We are here to provide for the most vulnerable in our society, and, in this specific case, for children's welfare. He referenced my orange stickies. I think he and I are a good example of how orange and blue can work together to get things done and actually truly work on legislation for the people that we serve.

He talked about deficiencies and the 14 years that it has taken this government to make changes to a piece of legislation that they knew hadn't been reviewed for 32 years. The Liberals continually say, "We can do better." The people of Ontario expect them to always do better, not take this long.

Kingston and the Islands: I thank you. You talked a little bit about First Nations. It's interesting that you comment, and so did the minister when he was in the room, that we will not force amalgamations on our First Nations folks. If that's the case, why is it in the draft legislation? Why wouldn't you just make it clear and simple right there so we don't have to waste any time even discussing it, and can move on to the other things that need to be discussed?

My colleague from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington asked the same question. It's a case of, why would you put it in there? There's always that fear that if you're putting it in there, there's some devious reason.

My colleague from Sarnia–Lambton always comes prepared. He's always here. He talked about the positives. We do try to find positives in any legislation, but also our job as opposition is to point out when there can be other areas that we can improve. He talked about coroner's recommendations; this could have been done, Mr. Speaker, four years ago. My colleague Rod Jackson, the MPP for Barrie at the time, had a private member's bill with all-party support. It could have been done.

My colleague and friend from Timiskaming–Cochrane spoke as well. He spoke about the continuance of care for children and full consultation.

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I think we're mostly all on the same wavelength, those speaking here today, and I want to conclude my remarks by saying that in legislation such as this, there is absolutely no room for error. We have to get this right. It's about our children and their welfare, and the first and every priority has to be the programs and services that put their programs and their welfare first.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to join the debate today on Bill 89, Supporting Children, Youth and Families Act, 2016, for second reading.

This is an important piece of legislation. It has taken a long time for it to get to the floor of the Legislature. It

has taken a long time for us to pull the disparate parts that have been part of private members' bills for many years into one piece of legislation.

I will say at the outset that it has a very, very progressive preamble. It's very hard to disagree with the language that is contained within the preamble of this piece of legislation.

I will, just to mix it up a little bit, start off with something good about the bill and something that we all agree on, because it has been a part of private members' bills in the past. Schedule 2 of Bill 89 amends the CFSA to include services for 16- and 17-year-olds on an interim basis until the CYSFA is proclaimed. This has been a long-overlooked issue around protecting children in the province of Ontario.

It also enacts schedule 3, to be enacted at the appropriate time, to decommission the Child Abuse Register when the Child Protection Information Network, CPIN, is fully implemented, and amends other acts in reference to the CFSA.

With CPIN it's really interesting. Just like many MPPs, I reached out to my local family, children and youth services and found that they were very close to getting CPIN up and running in Kitchener–Waterloo. But it is of interest that it costs about \$1 million to upgrade that system, that network. The ministry funded the agency \$250,000. This will be a theme of my comments, that there is a disconnect between the good intentions of this legislation and the resources that are available to CASs across this province. I think that if we don't get that part right, then we will actually be in the same place, debating the same issues, going forward.

The other part is that in part, it does appear that the government has embraced some of Katelynn's Principle. We've been calling for updates to this act for years and, of course, the member from Hamilton Mountain has been a great advocate for children in care and their safety for years. In fact, elements of her private member's bill enacting Katelynn's Principle are a main feature of the new act, but it should be a companion to that act. I think that's room for improvement.

As you have already heard, we are going to be supporting this piece of legislation to go to committee, but we are going to be looking for very specific measures which make Bill 89 stronger.

Just on the point of having 16- and 17-year-olds under protection on an interim basis, 16- and 17-year-olds are now eligible for services and protection with their consent, but there is no duty to report abuse of those who are 16 and 17 years old. Actually, the executive director from Kitchener–Waterloo raised the hypothetical question, which actually does happen—

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Hypothetical.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Well, because there are many instances of child abuse in the province of Ontario and none of them are the same thing. But if you had children who came into care when sexual abuses were reported in the home, and say you have a nine-year-old and an 11-year-old, but then you have a 16- and a 17-year-old, are

the 16- and 17-year-olds afforded the same protections? Because they actually have certain rights.

This is a legitimate question—possibly hypothetical, but in all reality, it happens across the province. That is why the legislation needs to be updated.

I will say that I find myself in a very interesting position here because, for almost two years, I worked on the transformation agenda which this government rolled out in 2008 and 2009. I was a researcher with the faculty of social work at Wilfrid Laurier, so I was travelling and speaking primarily to parents who had interactions with children's aid societies across the province. I was in Hamilton, and I was in Kitchener-Waterloo. We went as far as London and Windsor. The goal, if you will remember, of that piece of legislation sounds very much like the preamble that's contained within Bill 89, and that was around a child-centred focus and keeping families together, but that proved to be very complicated because you have to support families in order to keep those families together. That support costs a lot of money, and when you have a resource issue contained within those CAS agencies, it's hard to follow through on that agenda.

So the transformation agenda failed in the province of Ontario. I think it was well-intentioned. The research found that you started off really strong by supporting and teaching young adults how to be parents, supporting them on positive parenting strategies, not putting them into foster care but with next of kin and with close family relations, trying to support those family relations in keeping those kids within the family.

That was the goal, and I think that is, in part, part of the goal with this piece of legislation, but it's a lot of work to do that. You have to acknowledge it, and it is very costly. At the time, I don't think the government was quite willing to embrace the true cost of that work, but it does break the cycle of abuse. If the goal is to invest in prevention and education and support of healthy families, it can cost more at the beginning, but it certainly costs less at the end, and it is the most compassionate option and some would say the most ethical option.

Of course, language matters in legislation as well, and we share the concerns that have been used by several MPPs that there are a lot of "shalls," "mays," "with consideration" and "where appropriate," and that should be of concern to every MPP in this House because it leaves the door open in a very subjective way.

Now, I'm going to address the issue of race, and I'm going to be addressing the issue of First Nations, Métis and Inuit families, which the act does upgrade, actually, which is good, because language matters. I'm hoping that I can make the case that we have to ask the fundamental question: Why are so many First Nations, Métis and Inuit children in care? When we were doing budget tours, the Chiefs of Ontario came to the finance committee and told us that there are more First Nations, Métis and Inuit children in care today than there were ever in residential schools.

It was a shocking stat for me, but also what followed in this presentation—and it's a matter of public record—

is, why are children taken from their families? Then you go to the social determinants of health of those families: You look at the resources that those families do not have; you look at the lack of housing in those communities; you look at the lack of education in those communities. Many people don't know this, but when children are on-reserve and then they graduate out of grade 8, they usually have to go to a high school off-reserve. There are no supports basically to ensure the success of those children, so the continuum of care does not follow the child, and this remains an issue.

It leads me to wonder how the province, even with the best of intentions with this legislation, is going to navigate through a long-standing issue that we have in this country and we have in this province. This relates around Jordan's Principle, Mr. Speaker. Now, for those of you who don't know, Jordan's Principle is a child-first principle designed to ensure that funding disputes between jurisdictions do not affect the accessibility that First Nations children have to government services.

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The principle was developed based on Jordan River Anderson and his family's experience with discriminatory health care services in the province of Manitoba. Jordan spent two years of his life in a hospital unnecessarily, all because the federal and provincial governments could not agree on who should pay for government services for status and indigenous children on reserves. Jordan was born with complicated medical needs and spent his first two years in hospital, but once his condition stabilized, his medical team determined that Jordan would be able to receive the care he needed in a home setting. Doctors, his family, his community and the community agency in Winnipeg worked hard to make all of the arrangements for his transfer, but they were ultimately held up by federal and provincial officials who could not decide on who would pay. While they were deciding about who would pay for his home care, Jordan stayed in the hospital. Advocates worried that Jordan was growing up in the hospital called for officials to allow Jordan to go home and deal with the funding dispute later. Their request went unanswered, and Jordan ended up passing away in a hospital in 2005, at the age of five, years after doctors had cleared Jordan to go home.

So you will have these jurisdictional disputes between the federal and provincial governments, but it is important to note that this happens across the country, and it certainly happens in Ontario. Jordan's case is not unique. Research shows that indigenous children are frequently caught in these inter-jurisdictional disputes. What is important for us to understand is that the intersection between federal and provincial politics on this is very real, but the principle for Jordan's Principle is simple: It calls for provincial and federal governments to take a child-first approach to resolving jurisdictional disputes.

The problem, of course, is that the federal level, the current Liberal government, is still in courts with aboriginal communities, Mr. Speaker. This is after a nine-year legal fight. In January 2016, the Canadian Human Rights

Tribunal ordered that Canada comply with Jordan's Principle. A motion in support of Jordan's Principle was once again passed in the House of Commons in December 2016, three months ago, but the definition of it was changed. Jordan's Principle aims to ensure that First Nations children can access all public services that are available to other children. The motion that was passed in the House of Commons redefined Jordan's Principle to apply to children with complex medical needs, so you can see that the federal government is looking to not address all First Nations children, only some children who have complex medical needs. But according to the tribunal, Canada's ongoing discrimination widens the harm wrought by residential schools instead of narrowing it. We have what is a well-intentioned piece of legislation at the provincial level, but we actually have a federal government—Prime Minister Harper took First Nations communities to court for almost a full decade on this issue, and the current Prime Minister has continued that fight, Mr. Speaker.

Many of you will know Cindy Blackstock. She's a personal hero of mine, and a huge advocate. On the 10-year legal process of Jordan's Principle, she is quoted as saying, "You can imagine what has happened in children's childhoods over the decade that the case has been winding its way through. And all these little stall techniques from Canada have an additive flavour—in among themselves they don't sound so bad but when you add them up that is how we have gotten to the 10 years." She makes the point that this has turned into a public relations exercise around First Nations. She is quoted as saying the government is "exploring ways to make a public relations gesture on Jordan's Principle but falling short on compliance."

So you will have these nine children's aid societies in Ontario for First Nations, indigenous communities, really becoming victims of the federal government. This for me is a point of personal shame, that our country is fighting First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities just to deliver basic health care and the same resources that every child should have access to. We should not have third-world conditions for children in the province of Ontario, and this includes clean drinking water and it includes having regulations on housing, like fire regulations, or even basic health care for children, and counselling, as the member from Timmins—James Bay has also mentioned.

If that is not corrected, we will only see more children enter protective services, because neglect is one of the conditions, and any agency that sees a child in housing that is not safe or appropriate or clean, who is not attending school because of health care issues, who does not have the basic needs like food, like drinking water—this becomes a factor in First Nations, Métis, Inuit children being taken into care. The two issues are connected, and I dare anyone to tell me that they're not.

The issue on Katelynn's Principle—and I was very pleased to see that the government has at least embraced part of it: There are elements of Katelynn's Principle in various provisions, but they do not have the legislative

force that Bill 57, the private member's bill by the member from Hamilton Mountain, would like to have seen. We all would have liked to have seen those.

Katelynn's Principle is very similar to Jordan's Principle, though it comes from the death of seven-year-old Katelynn Sampson in 2008. At the time, Katelynn was living with legal guardians and died from injuries she incurred while under their care. An inquest after her death showed that there were several occasions when appropriate authorities could have intervened and they did not.

This is a debate that I will never forget, Mr. Speaker, with this private member's bill. We had family here and we had advocates here, and there was a collective understanding that the system failed Katelynn. We will continue to fail children if Katelynn's Principle is not fully embraced, if it is not a companion piece in Bill 89, Supporting Children, Youth and Families Act. This goes back to the very principle that a child's view must be given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child, and the child should be at the forefront of all service-related decision-making. Children will not be at the forefront of decision-making if those services don't exist.

This takes me back to the principle of resources. The amalgamation of children's aid societies, bigger societies and less direct connection with those communities—I share the fears that some of the members have expressed that bigger is not better. We need a very direct and connected relationship with those communities, and those communities need to know that the front-line staff of those agencies who we have all collectively thanked today—but the stress of that job, when you are under-resourced, compromises the quality.

I want to take this issue back to the quality of the care, quite honestly, because there are some worrisome parts for me in this. Some of you may not know this, but the contracting out and the privatization of protective services has happened for children in all of our communities. I don't know if you've ever done this, if you've knocked on a door where there's no name or anything, but it is a home for kids in care and there are usually five or six, and there are some child service workers there in the house—those are the children who have been taken into care who cannot find a foster home. This is a direct purchase for service that a private company is delivering.

What the children's advocate has found and what the Auditor General has found is that those kids are overly medicated to control behaviours, because these are children with complex needs, and they are often used with restraints. The overuse of restraints in these homes was found to be a huge issue.

What I mean by opening this door is that we have to understand that when kids are in care, it isn't always straightforward. It's wonderful to hear the member from Barrie talk about her positive adoption, but the more kids that come into care—the resources need to follow those children. Those services need to follow those children. At the end of the day, the minister responsible has this

overarching power to follow a mandate in this preamble—which is a progressive preamble, as I mentioned, but there is definitely a disconnect; I don't know what other word it is.

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I just want to leave you with one other point, because we will try to address this at committee. I think the idea of travelling this bill to remote communities would really drive home the points that I was trying to make today. The provincial advocate has said that there is no overall vision for children in care. We need to talk about that. What is the end result—healthy children reaching their potential, well-supported in our communities, so that every child can be successful.

Thank you very much for your time today, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I would like to thank, once again, all the members for their very thoughtful comments on this very important bill.

I do want to go back a little bit to the preamble. The preamble does, of course, acknowledge the unique relationship between Ontario and First Nations, Inuit and Métis people. In addition, there's also a reference to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and Jordan's Principle as well. Jordan's Principle and Katelynn's Principle have been very much integral in terms of informing this piece of legislation.

In terms of purpose and interpretation, it's also important to note that we've expanded the services to children and young people so that those services will be provided in a manner that respects regional differences. It will also respect a young person's race, ancestry, place of origin, and their cultural and linguistic rights. I think these are all extremely important points to remember.

As well, we have added a new statement about the rights of children and young persons, which includes the right to express their own views freely. They need to be at the centre; they are at the centre of the discussion in this very important bill. They'll be engaged in honest and respectful dialogue about why and how decisions that affect them are being made. They will have a role. Their views will be taken into consideration. They'll be consulted on the nature of the services that are provided. And they will be able to raise concerns or recommend changes with respect to the service provided, or that is going to be provided to them, without interference or fear of coercion, discrimination or reprisal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, this bill is much needed. Most of the content is a big improvement. It will do so much good for children, for families, for children's aid societies. But there are a few things in the bill that need a little bit of fixing.

As we spoke to earlier, as was mentioned by a couple of speakers here, the ministerial powers are greatly

expanded here, and that's a problem. Being able to enter property without a warrant or a notice is a problem.

I would like to see men's rights looked into, as I mentioned a bit earlier this afternoon. That can be done, but it's not mentioned in this bill.

So all the good work that is here is wonderful, it needs to be put in place, but the bill needs to be amended. I think the best way to do that—and it was mentioned earlier by the member from Timmins—James Bay—is that we should go on the road with the committee, travel around Ontario, and speak to the people of Ontario, and then we would learn.

I did have the privilege to be on the standing committee for developmentally disabled people a few years ago. We travelled to Toronto, London, Thunder Bay, Moose Factory and Ottawa. What a wonderful experience that was, talking to different ministries, agencies, community associations, volunteer groups, and parents involved in these troubled families. The nature of the problem is very similar here, and those same people could give us wonderful input. That would be where we would really learn how good this bill is or the amendments that need to be made, and that we should do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I would like to thank my colleague who did a great job for 20 minutes, showing a lot of passion around this issue. One of the things she did talk about, quite frankly, was First Nations. I had the honour to go to a powwow in Fort Erie on Saturday. I was absolutely surprised that there were close to 2,000 people there, and they were absolutely surprised that in First Nation reserves in Brantford they still can't drink the water. In Grassy Narrows, we've got mercury in the water. We have to do better for our First Nations, not only around this issue. I thought it was important to raise that today.

The whole almost three hours—two and a half hours—we talked about the importance of the kids, that this was all about children and how we best serve our children. How do we make sure that they're going to have the quality of life they deserve in a very tough environment, a very tough family life?

Then I found out during this debate—one of my colleagues mentioned to me that the Nipissing and Parry Sound CAS was locked out. So those same children whom we say we care about—we lock those workers out, and what do we do with them? We replace them with replacement workers. Some people call them "scabs." If we care about our children, then why are we allowing, in the province of Ontario in this day and age, using replacement workers and scabs in these types of situations? Mr. Speaker, I want to say that replacement workers and scabs should never be allowed in the province of Ontario, particularly when it involves our children.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Han Dong: Good afternoon. I'm very pleased to provide my comments on this bill, Bill 89, the Children, Youth and Family Services Act, 2016.

I was listening to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo’s speech and her comments on this bill. I noticed that she urged more consultation and more opportunity to listen to the general public and experts on this bill. I think if it passes second reading, at the committee level we will have lots of opportunity for that. But what caught my eye is that, if this bill passes, it allows for identification of a representative to provide advice around how best to account for a child’s identity when decisions about the care for that child are being made.

As well, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services will require societies to collect identity-based data to better support service planning and the delivery of culturally appropriate services. I think that is a very important aspect, particularly for the city of Toronto, where we know that over half of the residents here in Toronto were born in another country. Many, many newcomer families here have young children. It’s so important to make sure that we have a culturally sensitive approach when we talk about children and youth services.

I myself, in the short three years serving my wonderful community, have had opportunities to speak to parents who are challenged. Sometimes it’s not knowing what the process is, how to deal with different agencies; sometimes it’s because of a language barrier they face. So I think that is a very important aspect to this bill, and I would like every member of this House to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Kitchener–Waterloo can respond.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I appreciate the feedback that I received for the 20 minutes. I do want to say that it is interesting that the member from Kingston and the Islands and the member from Trinity–Spadina both touched on the First Nations issue and then the issue of race. Those are two gaps in this legislation.

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Just so that you know, an opportunity is missed in the act to require all society boards to have representation from the populations they serve. This is something we should fix. The boards should look like the communities they’re serving. This could include children in care, former children in care and families who have been involved with the child welfare system.

Particularly lacking is a requirement that diversity of race be represented, especially in those societies where there is an overrepresentation based on race—and there is. There are more African Canadians in care in the province of Ontario than other families, than other communities, and we need to find out why that is; we do.

Despite the extensive work done with One Vision, One Voice, there is little in the act to ensure that race and racism are adequately addressed. There is no requirement to collect data on overrepresented groups. Hopefully, the directorate might get to the bottom of that, but we need the data. We need to know why they’re going into care.

The minister must give notice to societies if he intends to amalgamate two or more societies. We’ve already addressed that.

We do have to get at the root issue of why protective services have an overrepresentation of African Canadians and marginalized cultural groups. We certainly need to draw the connection between why so many First Nations, Métis and Inuit children are also in care. When we find that out, then we can serve those communities with some integrity and dignity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been more than six and one-half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader or his designate specifies otherwise.

The President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Continue the debate, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I’m delighted that we took the decision to continue the debate, because I was getting worried, Speaker. It’s unfortunate that we don’t have a lot of time.

Let me just begin by saying that I want to give a shout-out to Highland Shores CAS. This is an agency, a CAS, that came together around 2011 or 2010, I believe it was. It’s made up of three other CASs: Northumberland CAS, Hastings CAS and Prince Edward CAS. It was a very friendly amalgamation. I think that all three CASs have seen some of the benefits of working together, and at the end of the day, they’re doing a fantastic job. I just want to take the opportunity to thank, first of all, the staff, but just as important, the 14 board members, including the chair, for the great work they do for kids.

We’ve heard a number of times today, as we listened to other members from all sides of the House, how important it is to put protections around our kids. Speaker, they are our future; there is no question about it. As much as we think we’re invincible and we’re going to be here forever, I’m not sure we are. I depend on my four kids—they’re all married—and nine grandkids, and all of the other kids, to make sure that we have a good future as we move forward.

Anything that we can do to improve the life or the well-being of kids as they come into the working world, into the adult world and have their own families—this is the time that we need to pay attention. I would say that this is where we have to sort of focus.

I’m also delighted to hear, in general, from the House, from both sides, that there is support. We might have to do some tweaking, some adjustments, and when it goes to committee, we have that opportunity. I look forward to getting it past this stage and then going to committee.

One of the comments that I want to make, based on what I heard from a couple of speakers today, and to kind of put it in some perspective—they talk about maybe the minister has too much power. Well, I hear over and over

again at times in this House, from both oppositions—they'll point to a minister and say, "You need to have that power," or "You have the power to fix whatever." Speaker, we can't talk from both sides of our mouths. Here, we're trying to put a piece of legislation to look after those kids, and we have a minister, or capable ministers, and regardless of what party is in power, I think we have to have that respect that their interest is what's best for the kids.

I, frankly, don't buy all of it, because I think that at the end of the day, we have to have some appreciation for what ministers do. There has been—you heard earlier on from the minister himself, when he was doing a couple of minutes of comments, that there has been an enormous amount of consultation with stakeholders and with parents, and that's not ending. I'm sure that once we get it past second reading, there will be more consultation.

I just want to take the last couple of minutes that I have—I know that you're looking at the clock, and so am I, Speaker. Please, when the time comes, ring my bell.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: "Ring my bell, ring my bell."

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: There you go. I just want to talk about a couple of things that are really what this bill

does. I know we heard it, but it's worth repeating to reinforce it. I know that when I meet with my CAS, one of the things that was a constant was the concern of the board members, the staff, and frankly the concern of some of the parents who were still connected to their kids: What happens when they turn 16? Expanding it a couple of years so that CAS still has the opportunity to help is, I think, really, really important. I think that's a huge plank.

The other piece: It affirms the rights of children and acknowledges the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. I think many jurisdictions took certain issues on hand, but this really kind of reaffirms that and brings it together. It recognizes the importance of diversity, inclusion and the need to continue to address systematic racism. I don't want to speak about racism; we spoke to no end about that. But it is very, very critical, and I'm glad that on this piece, we're kind of reinforcing it.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It is close to 6 o'clock. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research, Innovation and Science / Ministre de la Recherche, de l'Innovation et des Sciences
Munro, Julia (PC) Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	York–Simcoe Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	Halton	Minister of the Status of Women / Ministre de la condition féminine Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care / Ministre responsable de la Petite enfance et de la Garde d'enfants
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Attorney General / Procureur général Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP) Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Essex Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint de parti reconnu
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation
Vacant	Sault Ste. Marie	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Michael Mantha
Bob Delaney, Cheri DiNovo
Joe Dickson, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Michael Mantha
Peter Z. Milczyn, Arthur Potts
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Ann Hoggarth
Yvan Baker, Toby Barrett
Han Dong, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
Peter Z. Milczyn
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Granville Anderson
Granville Anderson, Yvan Baker
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Nathalie Des Rosiers, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Julia Munro
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
Granville Anderson, James J. Bradley
Wayne Gates, Amrit Mangat
Cristina Martins, Sam Oosterhoff
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Mike Colle
Bob Delaney, Nathalie Des Rosiers
Michael Mantha, Jim McDonell
Shafiq Qaadri, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Robert Bailey, James J. Bradley
Joe Dickson, Sophie Kiwala
Harinder Malhi, Michael Mantha
Monte McNaughton, Laurie Scott
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Vic Dhillon, Han Dong
John Fraser, Ernie Hardeman
Percy Hatfield, Randy Hillier
Monte Kwinter, Lisa MacLeod
Arthur Potts
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Lorenzo Berardinetti, Grant Crack
Jennifer K. French, Jack MacLaren
Ted McMeekin, Lou Rinaldi
Mario Sergio, Soo Wong
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Lorne Coe, Vic Dhillon
John Fraser, Amrit Mangat
Gila Martow, Ted McMeekin
Lou Rinaldi, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch